

Celts

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1 Ancient Origins of the Celts - Ancient Civilizations DOCUMENTARY

When the Celtic people are mentioned, we think of images of painted warriors, mysterious druids, and a defeated warlord, knelt before the might of the Roman Eagle. It might remind one of the rolling hills of Wales, the rugged Highlands of Scotland, or the Moher Cliffs of Ireland, where echoes of their ancient languages are still spoken today. Shared Celtic heritage is still dear to tens of millions of people worldwide. But who exactly were the Ancient Celts? Welcome to our new series, covering a 1500-year historical span of Europe's most enigmatic peoples. For the most part, the ancient Celts left virtually no written records of their own existence, so we are reliant almost solely on limited archaeological and etymological evidence to piece together their culture, while in the centuries leading up to the birth of Christ, a scattering of Greek and Romans writings give us a slightly more dynamic window into their society. Neither offer a complete survey of the Celtic world, but they provide us with a workable set of information that, in lieu of anything else, we have no choice but to rely on. The most popular narrative of the Celtic genesis can be found in the town of Hallstatt, which sits nestled against a lake between the idyllic peaks of the Alps. It was here, between the years of 1846 and 1863, that an Austrian mine operator known as Johann Georg Ramsauer excavated the derelict cemetery of an ancient salt-mining community. The material culture discovered here was named the Hallstatt Culture, after the town it was discovered in, and is widely considered to be the birthplace of an early Celtic society. The Hallstatt culture has since been broken up into four chronological phases, based on the evolution of artifacts found in its sites. Hallstatt-A and B emerged in the late Bronze age between 1200-800BC in Central Europe. It was initially a minor deviation of the Indo-European Urnfield Complex, an older material culture prominent across much of central Europe. Hallstatt society was based on mining salt, copper, and tin, and trading them to outlying regions. These were crucial products, for salt was used to preserve meat in winters, while copper and tin were used to forge Bronze, the most precious metal of the era. The peoples of the Hallstatt heartland grew prosperous from this trade, which remained a core part of their economy for centuries to come. Around 800 BC, ironworking was introduced to the Hallstatt through trade with the Hittites and Greeks. This started the Hallstatt-C era, where the proto-Celts came into their own as a culture distinct from the Urnfield complex. They built hillforts throughout central Europe, populating them with artisans and warriors, led by petty Chieftains. It was at this point in the early iron age that they started developing a class system and social inequality, becoming more hierarchical. Graves excavated from the Hallstatt A and B eras were uniformly simple and egalitarian in nature, however, burials from Hallstatt C onwards show a great disparity in wealth and status. Clustered around their hillforts were great barrow mounds, the resting place of wealthy tribal elites. Here, nobles were buried alongside their treasures such as collars, brooches, axeheads, and other metalworks of bronze, iron and gold. These valuables oft featured iconic geometric designs and animalistic motifs. The presence of ivory and amber in these barrows suggest that they maintained trade networks that extended as far out as the Baltics and North Africa. Equestrianism was likely a symbol of power and nobility during this era, evidenced by the presence of a distinct style of slender slashing sword present in many graves, best suited for cavalry warfare. Additionally, the highest tribal elites were buried alongside ceremonial bridles, tackles, and ornate horse-drawn cult wag-

ons. The importance of the horse in aristocratic society was likely due to contact with the Indo-Iranian Cimmerians, from whom they adapted the horse and wagon as symbols of tribal power. It was perhaps through the mobility of the horse, and their economic and cultural soft power, that the Hallstatt peoples expanded out of their traditional heartland, and exported their cultural influence across much of central Europe. The transition from Hallstatt C to D occurred around 600 BC, and was marked by the culture shifting west along the Danube, Rhine and Seine rivers, gravitating towards the Greek Colony of Massalia, modern Marseille. The Phoenician Greeks of Massalia were the early Celts' gateway to the riches of the Mediterranean world. Through them they imported all sorts of southern luxuries, including fine pottery, glass, and the most precious luxury of all, wine. Late Hallstatt peoples soon began trading with other Mediterranean peoples, including the Phoenicians and the Etruscans, whose advanced civilization we've covered in a previous episode. The first historical mention of the Celts came in 517 BC from the Greek historian Hecataeus of Miletus, who referred to the people living beyond Massalia as Keltoi. This word was possibly borrowed from a tribal endonym, or was Greek for "the tall ones", contributing to the enduring stereotype that the average Celt stood a head taller than their Greco-Roman counterpart. Either way, it is a term that we still use today. Late Hallstatt chieftains consolidated a great amount of power by virtue of the foreign wealth they controlled. The many small hill forts that dotted the landscape were largely replaced by fewer but larger population centers, such as the ruins of an impressive tribal complex at Hueneberg in southern Germany. Meanwhile, the barrow mounds became more splendid than ever before, inlaid with luxury imports from Greece and Etruria. By around 500 BC the Hallstatt culture had reached its peak in wealth, territory, and influence. But how can we be sure that the Hallstatt material complex represents the early development of a distinct Celtic culture? First of all the swords found in late Hallstatt graves closely resemble the weaponry that Greco-Roman writers described the Celts using in later centuries. Secondly, the importance of the symbolic horse and wagon in burials was considered an early form of later Celtic funeral rites, which saw Chieftains buried within two-wheeled war chariots. The geometric and animalistic art style of the late Hallstatt era is accepted to be an early form of Celtic artwork, and perhaps most importantly, the name Hallstatt itself is derived from an old Celtic word meaning "Salt Place". This is reinforced by the fact that in the Celtic languages of Welsh, Cornish, and Breton, the words for "Salt" are Halwyn, Haloin and Hollein; presumably cognates of the same ancient root as the ancient word from which the name of the modern town of Hallstatt is derived. The evidence all seems to suggest that the Hallstatt heartland was where the Celts emerged as a visible people group, featuring an early form of the Celtic language, tribal hierarchy, and artistic expression. However, this theory has its problems: although by the late Hallstatt period, artifacts belonging to the culture could be found from Britain to Croatia, it did not mean that all the peoples in those lands were early Celts. Additionally, not all Celtic speakers in the early Iron Age would have belonged to the Hallstatt culture. The early Celtic language that became associated with the Hallstatt Heartland developed out of an older Indo-European tongue around 1500BC, and over centuries spread across much of central and western Europe. People on the periphery of the early Celtic world adopted the Proto-Celtic tongue due to the cultural and economic influence of the Hallstatt elites, but did not necessarily adopt the material culture. For example, Ireland and parts of Spain were predominantly Celtic-Speaking by the 5th century BC, but the Celtic migrants there had mixed with the indigenous populations of those regions to form the Celtiberian and Gaelic cultures, which had little to no

cultural continuity with the Hallstatt complex. Basically, there were those who followed the Hallstatt culture who were not Celtic speaking, and Celtic speaking peoples who were not of the Hallstatt culture. The prosperous world of the Hallstatt Chieftains came to a sudden end around 450 BC, when the increasingly imperialistic Massalian Greeks decided to abandon their old trade connections to instead try and subjugate the Celts, while the Etruscans shifted their trade routes away from the Hallstatt heartland. As a result, Celtic power shifted to the north, evolving into Hallstatt's dynamic successor, the La Tene. The La Tene culture lasted from around 450 to 50 BC, and is the most iconic era of ancient Celtic history. Developing in four separate tribal centers, principally along the Moselle and Marne rivers, it soon expanded across much of Europe. By 300 BC, the La Tene culture was dominant across Central Europe, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Switzerland, and later would arrive in Britain, western Spain, and Ireland. La Tene artwork was what the conventional mind considers quintessentially Celtic, featuring cauldrons, drinking vessels, weapons, shields, armour, and jewellery characterized by stylistic spiral patterns. It is here we slowly transition from relying primarily on archaeological finds, and into the written attestations of Classical Greek and Roman authors, who while often biased or misinformed, still give us a workable amount of information in piecing together the Celtic world, its language, politics, society, and religion. The general public may be familiar with the word "Gaul", a term often used to refer to the Celts of the La Tene world. This title comes from the old Germanic "walhaz", meaning "foreigner", which the Celts certainly would have been in the eyes of the ancient Germanic tribes. Meanwhile, when a young Roman Republic, encountered the La Tene Celts across the Alps in Northern Italy, they referred to them as "Galli", which might have been the name of an individual tribe they applied to the entire ethnocultural group. We will use the words "Gaul", "Gallic" and "Celtic" interchangeably, but generally this was not how the peoples in question referred to themselves. Indeed, a common misconception is that there was ever a linguistically or culturally uniform nation of Gallic people. By the La Tene period, the Celtic languages had diverged drastically from one another. The main split were the P-Celtic languages, spoken across North-Central Continental Europe and modern Britain, and Q-Celtic, the more lexically conservative tongues spoken by the Gaels of Ireland and probably the Celtiberians of Spain. This split can still be observed today in the modern Welsh and Irish languages, which are mutually unintelligible due to belonging to the P and Q subgroups respectively. It is unlikely that the speakers of their ancient counterparts would see any common ground between themselves. Gaels and Celtiberians aside, the Gauls of the continent and Britons of the isle to their north were perpetually a politically divided people. The main form of social organization in the Celtic world was the tribe, ruled by a hereditary Chief and his warrior aristocracy. A chief's lands were further subdivided into administrative districts called pagi, governed by lesser houses loyal to the chieftaincy in a system similar to Feudalism. Mainly through Roman records, we know that some notable tribes that existed in the late iron age include the Helvetii, Senones, Veneti, and Tectosages. Some names live on even today, such as the Belgae, who gave their name to modern Belgium, or the Parisii, for whom the city of Paris is named. Still, the Gaulish peoples likely acknowledged elements of a common culture that was shared beyond tribal lines. One constant was the social hierarchy. At the top of the pyramid was the Chieftain, who like his Hallstatt ancestors ruled rural communities from a Hillfort, which were constructed with timber-lace and stone ramparts the Romans called Murus Gallicus. Under the chief was an elite aristocracy of warrior-nobles. Next were craftsmen, mostly consisting of skilled metallurgists who lived in and around the

Chief's hillfort, supplying the warriors with arms and armour. 90% of Gallic society were subsistence farmers, providing a portion of their production to their Chief, who used it to maintain his warrior aristocracy, which in turn protected the farmers from external enemies in a mutualistic relationship. Wheat, barley, beans, oats, and peas made up the Gallic diet, while sheep, pigs and cattle were commonly raised for wool, meat, and milk. In the south of France, the Celts cultivated grapes and olives. Rather than being a primitive naturalistic people as common perception implies, the Gauls were actually highly developed, with ploughs, iron shares and coulters able to efficiently till even the heaviest soils. Most Gauls lived in small rural communities in rectangular houses of timber, wattle, daub, and clay, well insulated for cold winters. In Britain, Ireland, and Northwestern Spain, homes were mainly circular and built on unmortared stone. Architecture differed little between the social classes, though the feasting hall of a warrior aristocrat would be larger than a peasant's sheep farm. Greek and Roman writings and sculptures have given us a romanticized image of the average Gaul as a towering, red-maned noble savage sporting a manly mustache, while painted head to toe in terrifying war paint. In reality, the average Gaulish man would not have been much taller than the average Roman or Greek. While fashion differed from region to region, the Gauls tended to dress conservatively. Men generally wore long sleeved tunics and baggy trousers woven from flax and wool. Women tended to wear long dresses, while both sexes were often draped in cloaks decorated with colourful plaid patterns rendered from natural dyes of copper, berries, plants, and stale urine. Personal grooming was highly important to the Celts. For example, both sexes were said to meticulously and painfully pluck all their body hairs. Additionally, there is some truth to the stereotype of the thick Gallic mustache, depicted often in both Celtic and Greco-Roman iconography, it was likely believed to be a sign of manhood & virility. Gallic warriors were also said to have washed their hair in a mixture of slaked lime and water which stiffened it into white spikes. Tattoos and skin dyes were not practiced by continental Gauls, and were limited mainly to the ancient Britons, who according to Roman accounts, rendered a bluish dye from the *isatis tinctoria* flower, called woad, which when applied to their flesh was said to provide magic protection in battle. Often of cultural or spiritual significance, jewellery was common among the upper classes. The brooch, a fastener for a cloak, was a remarkably enduring characteristic of celtic fashion for centuries. Bracelets and arm rings were common, fashioned in the ornate swirling style characteristic of La Tene art. The Torc, a weight metal neck-ring, was a symbol of status and rank, said to bestow the protection of the Gods to whoever wore it. On that note, we should take a moment to explore the religion of the Ancient Celts. There are two major misconceptions of Ancient Celtic Polytheism, one perpetuated by modern neo-Pagan groups, who often portray the ancient Celtic faith as a pure, idealized form of proto-environmentalist nature worship, and one perpetuated by the Ancient Romans, who sought to portray the Celts as backwards barbarians. The Gaulish Gods did not belong to an ordered pantheon, and religion across the Celtic world was not uniform. Today we know of over 400 Gallic deities, most being the holy patron of a single tribe, or a local god associated with a certain area, like Sequana, who was worshipped only at the mouth of the River Seine. However, there were a handful of Gods who were prominent across the Celtic world. These would include the thunder-wielding Taranis, Maponos the God of Youth, Belenus the Sun God, Cernunnos the Horned One, Epona the Horse goddess, and Toutatis, the war-like Tribal protector. One of their most popular Gods was Lugh, patron of business, trade and technology, dismantling the misconception that Celtic polytheism was purely naturalistic. Celtic religious rites were rigidly structured,

and not unlike the Olympian religion when it came to sacrifice and divination. It was facilitated by a class of professional priests - The Druids. Today, the Druids conjure up a popular image of mysterious, long-bearded elders in white robes. However, they actually wielded massive political influence, often serving as peace-makers and diplomats on behalf of their chieftains, mediating legal matters, serving as healers, and heading education in their tribe. Training in order to become a druid involved an intense 20-year regimen, in which a dedicant had to memorize a massive array of oral histories, lore, medicinal knowledge, astronomy, religious rituals, and divination practices. Meanwhile, magic potions that bestow superhuman strength on their drinkers are regrettably absent from Druidic historiography. The Druids likely belonged to a common order that existed beyond tribal lines. They hosted a pan-Gaulish meeting each year among the Forests of the Carnutes, sacred ground where major political or religious issues were settled between tribes, making them a key vehicle in maintaining a common identity among the many tribes. One of the key duties of a Druid was to officiate sacrifices to the Gods. Human sacrifice is often described as a core part of Celtic ritual. According to the Roman author Lucan, different Gods called for different forms of ritual slaughter. Toutatis' victims were drowned in a vat of water, while Taranis' called for men to be beheaded, or burned alive in giant effigies of straw. According to the greek historian Diodorus, human victims were also sacrificed for the purposes of divination. The Druids never wrote anything down, keeping their knowledge a secret restricted to members of their order. We will never have their own accounts of their religious rites, while the Roman authors who wrote about these practices had a vested interest in making their Celtic enemies look savage and barbarous. We can't deny the existence of human sacrifice, but we should also keep in mind the limited perspective that modern scholars have been offered on the subject.

2 Ancient Celtic Armies: Invasion of Rome and Greece

The first episode of our series on the Ancient Celts covered the early origins, as well as culture, religion, political structure, and economy of the peoples. In this second episode we will discuss the armies of the Celts, their weapons, armors and tactics, the expansion of these Ancient people, and their invasions of classical Rome and Greece. Between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC, La Tene Celtic culture had assimilated its way across a staggering amount of Europe. This is exemplified by modern day countries as far apart as Portugal and Ukraine, which both have provinces named ‘Galicia’ - land of the Gauls. Warfare played a huge role in this continental spread, which begs the question, what made the Celts such effective fighters? The stereotypical image of the Gallic warrior perpetuated by Greco-Roman writers is that of a savage, ferocious in spirit, but primitive in equipment and strategy. However, the full story is much more complex. For one thing, Gaulish arms and armour were highly advanced for their time. The Celts were master ironworkers who were able to arm their warriors with longswords, and spears with specialized tips for either thrusting or throwing, making the average Gaul deadly in melee and ranged combat. For protection, the Gallic fighters bore a long oakwood shield, with a hard iron boss for blunt-force bashing. Most warriors wore agen and port type helmets, featuring a brimmed iron dome, and a pair of wing-like cheekguards. There is also evidence that the Gauls were the inventors of chainmail, based on surviving pictorial evidence of a type of metal cuirass, made of tightly linked iron rings, the earliest historical example of such technology. The Romans were so impressed by Gallic metallurgy, that the Legionary’s helmet, his Lorica Hamata armour, and even his Gladius and Spatha swords, were all adapted from Celtic or Celtiberian designs. So, Roman armour as we know it today actually owes its iconic form in huge part to the innovations of the Celts. However, among the Celts themselves, body armour was rare, mainly reserved for select high-ranking nobles, while most warriors went into battle wearing just shirts, trousers, or in some cases, nothing at all. The naked warrior is one of the most enduring legends of Celtic history. Historical evidence suggests a significant amount of Celts did fight nude, either for religious purposes or to inspire fear in their enemies. Surviving depictions of bare skinned Celtic combatants in both artwork and historical record suggest that while the majority of Gauls did not fight naked, the practice was fairly normalized. The use of the iconic war-chariot also bares mentioning, as they were used both as versatile mobile missile units, and also as basic transport vehicles, quickly ferrying warriors from one theatre of battle to another. For all their arms and armour, the principal advantage of the Gallic army was their ability to utterly terrify their foe. Both Roman and Greek records report on the petrifying nature of the Celts, claiming that before any engagement, they would roar and brag, performing ritualistic war-dances while bellowing a deafening sound out of their boar-headed war trumpets. Put yourself in the shoes of a superstitious plebeian fresh off an ancient olive farm or slums of Rome, and you can appreciate the supernatural terror that a mob of screaming, dancing, horn-blaring muscle-men must have had. In terms of battle tactics, the Celts kept things fairly simple. Skilled javelin throwers would soften up enemy formation, while chariot and cavalry riders would be used to flank and harass. For the most part, a Gallic victory banked entirely on a disorganized blood-drunk charge, the impact of which was usually enough to rout the enemy formation, making it easy to slaughter them piecemeal. Ancient Celtic warfare may have lacked the discipline of a Legion or Phalanx, but it wasn’t primitive or basic. To the Gauls, war was a way of life, and their dynamic formula of inspiring terror in

their enemies and fearlessness among themselves was what saw their armies come to dominate not just the majority of continental Europe, but also take them right up to the doorstep of a young Roman Republic. From about 450BC, Gallic Northern and Central Europe became overpopulated, and many enterprising Celtic war leaders led their retinues southwards to Italy, which the Celts knew to be a bountiful land of olives, figs, and wine. According to the Livy, they first entered the peninsula as early as 600BC, when a multi-tribal band of immigrants led by the King Bellovesus of the Bituriges crossed the Alps, and made war on the northern cities of the Etruscans, a culturally sophisticated, but politically independent network of city-states whose heartland was in modern day Tuscany. Upon driving the Etruscans out of the Po Valley, the Gauls founded the settlement of Mediolanum, the modern city Milan. Other waves of migration followed, and by 400BC, various Gallic tribes had established themselves as the masters of a chunk of Northern Italy that stretched from the Alps to the Adriatic Coast. Indigenous Ligures to the west and Veneti to the east eventually became culturally assimilated by their Celtic neighbours. The Gauls were on the rise, but they were not the only growing power in Italy. In 400BC, the city of Rome was a smallish city-state of some 25,000 living in humble homes of brick and timber, long ways to go to the eternal city of marble it later became. Nevertheless, in the last 100 years the Romans established hegemony over all the cities of Latin league, overthrew their monarchy, and emerged as a dynamic Republic. In 396BC, the brilliant Roman commander, Marcus Furius Camillus, conquered the Etruscan city of Veii, establishing a foothold for further northwards expansion, putting Rome on the collision course with the Celts. Modern historians are split on how the first Gallo-Roman war broke out. Some claim that a Gallic tribe invaded Rome on behalf of Dionysus I, the tyrant of the Greek city of Syracuse, who wanted to knock the Romans down a peg for supporting his rivals in Messina. Others claim that the warlike Celts needed no incentive to invade Rome, and did so simply for glory and plunder. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus the seeds of conflict were sown when the King of the Etruscan Clusium, Lucumo, engaged in a dalliance with a married woman. Her aggrieved husband, an influential merchant named Aruns, went north to the Gauls of the Po Valley, seeking to use them as his instrument of revenge by convincing them to attack Clusium. Aruns' call was answered by King Brennus of the Senones, who was happy to make war on Clusium, coveting its riches and fertile lands. The people of Clusium were alarmed by the Gallic horde, and called to the Romans for aid. In response, the Roman senate sent a trio of ambassadors to serve as neutral mediators. When the ambassadors asked Brennus why he made war on Clusium, he tersely replied "for the same reason Rome conquers her neighbours". Tensions soon flared, and an armed quarrel broke out between the representatives of the Clusians and Senones. In the heat of the moment, one of the Roman ambassadors slew a Senone warrior. Brennus was infuriated by the breach in diplomatic conduct, and sent envoys to Rome, calling for the extradition of all three ambassadors, but his demands were refused. Thus the Gauls declared a blood-feud upon the Romans, and advanced southwards to settle the score. The military tribunes of Rome quickly mustered an army and marched out to meet their foe. In the fifth century BC, Rome was centuries away from fielding the professional legion: Wealthier citizens armed themselves in the style of the Greek Hoplite, but the majority fought with various destandardized weapons and little protection. They made their stand on the river Allia. It was the first time the Romans had faced the Gauls in battle, and never before had they stared into the face of such ferocity. The blair of the carnyx, the relentless screaming, and the disturbing nakedness spread terror among the Latins. The battle itself was brief,

from the withering hail of Gallic javelins, to the shock of the charge that followed, the army of the Republic broke. Many Romans drowned in the deep waters of the Allia, or were cut down. After his decisive victory, King Brennus led the Senones to Rome, and put the city to the torch. It was the first time the eternal city had ever been sacked, and it would take 800 years for any other foreign army to ever do so again. According to later Roman historians, a surviving core of senators and able-bodied citizens were able to retreat to the citadel on the Capitoline hill to mount a defense, watching helplessly while the rest of the city was thoroughly pillaged. The Senones twice tried to take the Capitoline, first with a frontal assault which was repulsed, and second with a night-time infiltration, which was famously foiled by the honking of the Sacred Geese of Juno. After many months of impasse, both sides had become emaciated by starvation and plague. The Romans resolve broke first, and they agreed to pay the Senones a sum of 1,000 pounds of Gold to make them leave. Here, Roman historian Livy claims that the Gauls weighted the measuring scales to cheat the Romans out of more tribute than had been agreed upon. When the Romans protested, Brennus threw his own sword onto the scale, bellowing: “vae victis”: woe to the vanquished. According to Diodorus of Sicily, it was at exactly this moment Marcus Furius Camillus arrived with a relief army. He defiantly threw his own sword on the scales, and declared: “non auro, sed ferro, recuperanda est patria” - We defend Rome not with gold, but with iron. He then attacked the Gauls, and drove them out of the city. These traditional recantings of the Senones’ war are likely the result of Roman propaganda. Livy and Diodorus authored their accounts centuries after the sack happened, and were probably trying to salvage some honour out of a particularly dark chapter of Roman history. In particular, Camillus’ last-minute heroics were likely a complete fabrication. Simply put, the true summary of the events is probably as follows: Gauls crushed the Romans, looted their city, blockaded the Capitoline hill, got paid, and went home. This simplistic take is plausible, because the Gauls were a simple war party that probably sought nothing more other than to obtain plunder and return to their families. It would take a generation for Rome to recover from the devastation brought upon it by the Senones, while conversely, Gallic influence in Italy grew ever stronger. Throughout the 4th and early 3rd centuries BC, Celtic war-parties regularly plundered into the Roman hinterlands, while Gaulish mercenary groups became a staple contingent of many anti-Roman factions, such as the Greek Tyrants of Sicily, and a certain up-and-coming Carthaginian thalassocracy. Rome would not be the only classical civilization the Gauls would make war on. Let us now shift our focus eastwards, to the land of Philosophers and Hoplites, and talk about the Celtic invasions of the Ancient Greek world. Gallic war parties had entered the northern Balkan Peninsula in the early 4th century BC, where they would spend the next century in sporadic warfare with the Illyrians, Thracians, Paeonians and other local native peoples. In 335BC, some Gauls had made it to Macedon, which at current was ruled by a young and enterprising Alexander. Yes, that Alexander. The Celts were always ready to respect a worthy warrior, and showed great admiration for the Macedonian King, daring not to invade Greece while he ruled. Alexander would go on to conquer most of the known world, only to die prematurely in Babylon, leaving his massive Empire to be divided up into squabbling Kingdoms ruled by his former generals. This changed things, for in the eyes of the Celts, Greece was now a divided land ruled by lesser men, a viable target for loot and plunder. In 298BC, the Gallic chieftain Cimbaules led a war party that pillaged its way through Thrace and Macedon, only to be stopped in its tracks by the army of the Diadochi King Cassander on the slopes of mount Haemus. Nevertheless, during this

expedition the Gallic Serdi established a foothold in Thrace, founding the settlement of Serdica on the site of the modern day Sofia. The next Celtic wave would arrive in 281BC, when a horde of 85,000 men, mostly of the Boii and Volcae tribes, split into three contingents and simultaneously invaded Paeonia, the rest of Thrace, and Macedon. During this expedition, a war chief known as Bolgios faced down the army of Ptolemy Keuranos, current king of Macedon, and son of the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. In the battle that followed, the Macedonian King himself was thrown from his war elephant and hacked to pieces by Gallic warriors. These initial successes increased the appetite for further incursions into Greece, and a year later, a Chieftain known as Brennos began calling for another southwards expedition. According to legend, Brennos called for an assembly of Gallic Chieftains, and presented before them a group of Greek captives, who were weak in body. He juxtaposed them with his finest, most well-built warriors, using this as proof that the Greeks were a weak people compared to the Gauls, and could be easily overrun. By 279BC, Brennos had successfully assembled a massive tribal coalition. Ancient sources claim his army amounted to a mind-boggling 150,000 warriors, but modern estimates give us a more realistic figure of 50,000. Brennos' pillaged through undefended Northern Greece unimpeded. Some stories claim that, when questioned on the sacrilegious nature of looting the temples, Brennos' pithily remarked: 'The Gods, being rich, ought to be generous to men'. Unbeknownst to the Gauls, a coalition of Aetolians, Boeotians, Athenians, Phocians, Corinthians and other cities had gathered an army of 40,000, many of whom were trained Hoplites. They decided to make their stand at the narrow coastal pass of Thermopylae, which was becoming a running theme at this point in ancient history. Meanwhile, a fleet of Greek triremes also docked in the nearby Malian gulf, ready to rain death upon their landward foe. Brennos' host soon arrived, and the battle was committed. The Celts funneled right into the narrow pass and barreled into their Hoplite enemies with typical Gallic fearlessness. Ancient Historian Hieronymus of Cardia gave a harrowing account of the melee: "They rushed with the rage, fury and blind courage of a wild beast. They hacked with swords and axes, pierced with darts and javelins. Their fury only died with life itself. Some warriors even plucked out the weapons that had struck them, and hurled them back at the Greeks." Nevertheless, the disciplined Greek Phalanx held the pass, while their navy pelted the Celts with a hail of missiles. Brennos was eventually forced to retreat, having lost thousands of his warriors, while the Greeks only suffered 40 casualties. Brennos pillaged and burned his way across Aetolia in an attempt to break up the united Greek army by forcing the Aetolian contingent to rush back to defend their homes. This worked, but the Celts were nonetheless driven off by the returning Aetolian warriors. Following this, Brennos made a final gambit, rearing his army eastwards for the sacred Oracle of Delphi, hoping that seizing the riches of Apollos' temple would salvage the expedition. Here, the united Greek force reconstituted itself and made a final stand. The Gauls were crushed, losing over 16,000 men in the battle and the ensuing retreat. In the eyes of the Greeks, it was a victory delivered by Apollo himself, who saw fit to punish the temple-defiling barbarians. Most of the surviving Celts retreated back to Thrace, while a completely dishonoured Brennos committed suicide. The Gallic invasion of Greece was a failure, but it had one significant consequence. Before the march on Delphi, a contingent of the Gallic horde, composed mainly of warriors from the Tectosages, Trocmii, and Tolistobogii tribes, had peeled off from the main invasion force and crossed the Dardanelles into Anatolia. Unlike Brennos' main force, which had come to Greece to raid and plunder, this group had come to settle. They built forts on the rugged hills of central Anatolia, and established permanence for themselves in the region

by serving as mercenary shock-troops in the many wars being fought in the region between various Hellenic rulers. The region of Asia Minor these Gauls inhabited became known as Galatia, and the people who lived in it the Galatians. Remarkably, even though they were surrounded by foreign peoples, and isolated from the rest of the Gallic world, there is evidence that the Galatians of Anatolia retained their Celtic language and culture as late as the 6th century AD. In 279BC, the Celtic world was at its greatest extent. Spread out over a massive territory that overlapped the borders of modern nations as diverse as Ukraine, Czechia, Austria, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Turkey, Italy, France, Britain, Portugal and Spain. This was the golden age of the Celts, but like all golden ages, it was not to last. Brennos' defeat in Greece had proven something important: a well-trained, well-armed professional army, fighting as a single disciplined body, was fully capable of resisting the howling terror of the Gallic horde. This was a stark reality that the Gauls would soon learn well, as back in Italy, a certain Latin Republic was on the mend, and ready to take her revenge upon the barbarians who had once laid her so low.

3 How Rome Conquered the Ancient Celts

In the 3rd century BC, the Celtic peoples were still the masters of continental Europe. A hundred years earlier, Gaulish warriors had set Rome ablaze, marking the lowest point in the history of the young Republic, but it would soon recover and as the eagle spread its wings, the sun had begun to set on the Celtic world. Welcome to the third video on our series of the ancient Celts, where we will cover the Roman conquests that brought an end to the independence of the Gauls from Iberia in the west, to Anatolia in the east. After winning the second Samnite war, the Roman Republic had expanded its territory and become the hegemons of central Italy. In 298BC, the third Samnite war began, with the Etruscans, the Samnites, and the Gallic Senones tribe all trying to curb the growing power of Rome. The Senones had been the terror of the Republic since they sacked Rome two generations earlier, and in 295, they massacred a Roman army outside the Etruscan city of Clusium, with Livy claiming that the heads of legionaries were mounted on the Gallic spears as they sang their triumphant war songs. Yet, the tides turned later that year, when the Senones and their Samnite allies clashed with the Romans outside Sentinum, where they were crushed. Taking advantage of their victory in the third Samnite war, the Romans pushed north, conquering the lands of the Senones by 283BC, where they established a military colony called Sena Gallica. The sack of Rome had finally been avenged. This was a critical junction in the Gallo-Roman story, for the Gallic illusion of invincibility had begun to dim. But what had changed since the sack of Rome to allow the armies of the Republic to finally be able to go toe to toe against the most terrifying warriors in the ancient world? After being humbled by their Italic cousins during the beginning of the second Samnite war in 315BC, the Romans realized that the phalanx they had inherited from the Etruscans and Greeks was not a versatile fighting formation, especially on uneven terrain, or against a particularly malleable foe. With the goal of developing a more dynamic standing army, they created the innovative manipular system. Under this system, the standard Roman legions were organized into three rows, each one comprised of a checkerboard-like pattern of titular maniples, a basic unit of soldiers containing 120 heads. Compared to a Phalanx, which consisted of single, conjoined rows of men, the dynamic maniples were able to maneuver about more effectively by virtue of being separate units. The Manipular legions were organized into three standard rows. The frontlines were made up of hastati, fresh recruits. Behind them were the principes, who were battle-hardened soldiers. Finally, the back row was made up of triarii, the most veteran elites, and the last resort in battle. Originally manufactured to battle the mounted Samnites, the Manipular system soon proved effective against the Celts. As you will recall, Gallic warfare revolved around using fear tactics to plummet enemy morale before utilizing a single ferocious charge aimed to break their lines. This had worked in 390 BC, but the new Maniples were far better equipped to weather the Gallic onslaught. Their three-line reserve system meant that no single charge could rout a Roman legion, as even if the front line of hastati broke, there were fresh, experienced principes and triarii to replace them. Moreover, the general maneuverability of the Manipular Legions allowed them to counter the effectiveness of more mobile Gallic units like the war chariot. It should, however, be noted that these innovations did not make the Romans invulnerable to Gallic warfare. As the protracted, centuries-long invasion of the Celtic world continued, many tribes would adopt styles of battle better suited for countering the professional Roman war machine, scoring many victories that delayed the Imperial advance into Gaulish lands. In the decades after their conquest of Senones' territory, Rome would become

entangled in several other wars, first locking horns with Pyrrhus and his lumbering war elephants, then with Carthage for the first time. By the end of these wars, Rome had become the undisputed master of peninsular Italy, and the way into the Celtic lands of the Po Valley was now open. In 232BC, the Senate began parcelling off former Senones territory to their poorer citizens. The other Celtic tribes in the area assumed that this policy of Roman policy of aggressive frontier settlement meant that expansion into their lands was next. Thus, the Boii, Insubres and Taurisci spearheaded a campaign to push the Republic back to Latium. They also paid a company of particularly wolfish Gallic mercenaries from the far side of the Alps - the Gaeseti to join their cause. If you recall from our last chapter when we talked about how some Gallic warriors fought completely naked, that was these guys. At the head of 70,000 footmen, horsemen and charioteers, the Boii and their allies quickly overran Roman Etruria by 225BC plundering their way south. Near the town of Faesulae, the Celts were finally confronted by a Roman army, and by now they knew better than to charge the Roman maniples head on. They made clever use of decoy fires and the cover of darkness to ambush their enemy from behind, massacring 6,000 Roman soldiers and forcing them to retreat. The Gauls were not a mob of blood-drunk barbarians, but dynamic, cunning, and adaptable warriors who refused to underestimate their foe. Nevertheless, upon hearing that a much larger relief force led by Roman consul Aemilius Papus was on their tail, the Gallic allies decided to quit while they were ahead and return home with their plunder, an inauspicious decision. In the narrow hill valley outside the town of Telamon, the Gauls were caught and pincered between two consular armies. What followed was a massacre, outnumbered two to one and sandwiched on two fronts, the lightly armoured and in some cases fully naked celts were culled by a hail of Roman javelins, before being cut down by the seemingly tireless lines of the Roman maniples. Ancient sources claim over 40,000 Celts were massacred in this battle. The defeat at Telamon shows us another disadvantage that hamstrung the Gauls: disunity. Celtic leaders systematically prioritized the needs of their own tribe, and even when different tribes worked together, it was always a temporary measure. Before the campaign, the Romans had paid off Boii's tribal rivals, the Cenomani and Veneti, to invade Boii lands, forcing the Boii to keep a significant portion of their warriors north to defend their borders rather than bear the full brunt of their army down upon Rome. Celtic disunity also played a major role in the disparity in the quality of equipment between the Roman and Gallic warriors. As we covered in the last chapter, the Celts were incredibly skilled metallurgists, but their fragmented tribal society prevented them from pooling their resources together to arm everyone equally. Rome, on the other hand, was a single united polity with advanced infrastructure and central administration, able to churn out professional legions equipped with standardized gear. After their victory at Telamon, the Romans pushed deep into the Celtic alps, occupying much of northern Italy. Not that they would be able to savour the sweetness of victory long, for only a few years later, round two would erupt between the Republic and Carthage, which this time was led by Hannibal Barca. In one of the most iconic military maneuvers in history, Hannibal aimed to surprise the Romans by marching through the treacherous Alps. There he was hailed as a liberator by the Boii and Insubres, who joined the Carthaginian army en masse. However, some tribes like the Cenomani declared their loyalty to Rome and thus had to be defeated by Hannibal's forces. Nevertheless, at the battle of Cannae, where 30,000 Romans were slaughtered, much of the Carthaginian army was composed of Gallic mercenaries, as well as Celtiberians, who we will get to later. Since we all know how Hannibals' story ends, let's fast forward a little bit. As Rome emerged out of the second

Punic war bloodied but victorious, they shifted their attention back northwards, where the Boii and Insubres continued to resist Roman expansion. Even the Cenomani, who had benefited little from their friendship with Rome, turned against their former allies. Nevertheless, Rome had put down these insurrections by 191BC, and finally conquered all the Gauls of northern Italy. Now, let us move westward, and explore a lesser-known theatre in which the Roman Eagle clashed with the Celtic boar-head. Since the dawn of recorded history, the Iberian peninsula had been a highly cosmopolitan land. By the 3rd century BC, it was home to a variety of Celts, and non-Celtic peoples like the Lusitanians, Turdetani, Aquitani and Iberians, whose languages and cultures probably pre-dated the arrival of the Celts in the region. The Celtiberians, who lived in northwestern Spain were a divergent Celtic culture probably created from intermixing between Celtic migrants and the native Iberians. They spoke a Celtic language that was very different from the Gaulish languages of the rest of continental Europe. Much like in Italy, the story of Celts in Iberia is tied to the eternal struggle between Rome and Carthage. The North African empire had had colonies along the peninsulas' south coast for centuries, but during the interbellum between the first and second Punic wars, Hamilcar Barca and his young son Hannibal had pushed deep inland. Celtiberian tribes like the Carpetani put up fierce resistance but were soon subdued. Iberia would consequently become one of the most crucial theatres of the second Punic war. When Rome won, it replaced Carthage as the local hegemon. This put the Celtiberians on their frontier, and border skirmishes began almost immediately. Tensions reached a boiling point in 181BC when the Romans began importing thousands of Latin colonists, much to the locals' chagrin. In response, an alliance of Celtiberian tribes mustered some 35,000 men and faced off a consular army led by Proconsul Quintus Fulvius Flaccus near Aebura, but despite putting up a dogged resistance, they were defeated. Two years later, a campaign spearheaded by Roman Praetor Sempronius Gracchus grinded his way across Hispania's many ardently defended hillforts, eventually bringing much of Celtiberia to heel. Gracchus imposed order through the taking of noble hostages, the founding of Roman towns, and the encouragement of Celtiberians to enlist in the Roman army. This worked for a time, but in 153BC, war broke out again when the Celtiberian Titti tribe rose up in revolt alongside their Lusitani allies. This insurrection was eventually put down too, but not before the Iberians had inflicted thousands of Roman casualties, including a Teutoburg-esque victory where 6,000 legionaries were massacred by ambush in a thick forest. Another great revolt would erupt in the following decades, but in 133BC, the great fortress of Numantia, which had long been the heart of Celtiberian resistance, had fallen into Romans hands. After this, most of Hispania fell under Roman control. Nevertheless, insurrection and rebellion remained endemic in the region. The entire peninsula didn't come under the Empire's dominion until after the Cantabrian wars in 19BC, rounding out a mind-boggling 200 years of struggle. Paradoxically, one of the first territories the Romans conquered outside Italy was also the one it struggled the longest against to completely pacify, a testimony to the valor of the Iberians. It is now that our story shifts east, to the sun-baked highlands of central Anatolia. Here dwelt the Galatians, a collection of Celtic tribes who had been transplanted into the region as a byproduct of King Brennos' failed invasion of Greece in 279BC. Living amidst a sea of Greek-speaking successor states to Alexander's Macedonian Empire, the Galatians had adopted many of the trappings of classical Greek culture. They primarily made their fortunes as career mercenaries, as their Gallic ferocity made them the ideal shock troopers in any ambitious Macedonian Kings' army. For a century, the Gauls of Anatolia earned a fortune pillaging the fortunes of Greek rulers on behalf of other

Greek rulers. At the turn of the 2nd century, the Galatian tribes attached themselves to the army of the Hellenic worlds' mightiest King, Antiochus III of the Seleucid Empire. One has to imagine that the Gauls assumed this would be a contract like any other. They were wrong, Antiochus was engaged in a struggle for hegemony over the Greek-speaking world with none other than the Roman Republic. Inevitably, the Seleucid King's ambitions would turn to ash in his mouth when his cataphracts, war elephants, scythed chariots, and Gallic mercenaries were decisively defeated by the Romans and their Pergamene allies at the battle of Magnesia in 191BC. With the Seleucids humbled by the Scipio brothers, the Roman consul Gnaeus Manlius Vulso proposed that the Republics should expand into the highlands of Galatia. The official pretext for war was that the Galatians had fought alongside the Seleucids, but in truth, Rome was probably lusting after the rich plunder that the Anatolian Gauls had accumulated over their century of mercenary work. In 189BC, a coalition of 50,000 Galatians from the Tolistobogii and Trocmi tribes faced off against the legions at the foot of Mount Olympus. Like their kinsmen in Europe, the Galatians also fought with little armour, and were thusly shredded by a shower of Roman javelins. In the aftermath, 40,000 Galatian men, women and children were captured and sold into slavery. Anatolian Gauls remained nominally independent, but increasingly bound to the will of Rome. After the Republic absorbed Pergamon in 133BC, the Galatians became a useful buffer state, who the Romans used to wage a proxy war on their Cappadocian and Pontic enemies. During the Mithridatic wars, the Galatians were faithful allies to Pompey the Great in his struggle against the Pontic King Mithridates. In 25BC, after nearly 150 years of gradual Romanization, Galatia was finally annexed and became a province of the Empire. Now, let us dial the clock back to the 2nd century BC and return to Northern Italy: With the Alps in Rome's control, the proverbial door was open for its legions to march into the region of the Gallic world roughly corresponding to modern France, the very heart of the Celtic La Tene world. That catalyst for this came in the form of the Greek city of Massalia, which had a complicated centuries-long relationship with the Celtic tribes they were surrounded by. By the 2nd century BC, they had also become close allies and trading partners with the rising star that was Rome, so in 154BC when the Gallic Salluvii tribe threatened to invade them, the Greeks called for the Roman help. The Republic was happy for an excuse to send its legions beyond the Alps, and helped defend Massalia from the Salluvii twice, once in 154 and again in 125. After the second bout, the Romans 'magnanimously' offered to assume control of Massalia's hinterlands to protect them from further Gallic incursions. The Greeks, caring more about trade than territorial integrity, agreed. Meanwhile, the defeated Salluvii King, Toutomotulos, had fled north to the territory of the Allobroges, who were closely allied to the Arverni. This gave the Romans the perfect *casus belli* to pursue an expansionist campaign into the rich land of these two tribes. Under the pretext of chasing Toutomotulos, they invaded the territory of the Allobroges and Arverni, and by 121BC had conquered much of southern France. They incorporated it into their Empire as the province of Transalpine Gaul, which meant Gaul beyond the Alps, named in juxtaposition to Cisalpine Gaul, Gaul within the Alps. After the establishment of the Province of Transalpine Gaul, later renamed Gallia Narbonensis, the frontier between the Celts and the Romans remained relatively stable, and even friendly, for the better part of a century. One example of this was the Celtic federation of Noricum, which by the late 2nd century BC had developed a mutually symbiotic relationship with Rome. The skilled metallurgists of this region provided the Republic with much of the steel they needed to equip their legions, and in turn, the legions provided

them with military protection. Consequently, when the Germanic Cimbri and Teutones people invaded Noricum in 113BC, the Romans were quick to defend their Gallic allies. At the turn of the 1st century BC, trade between Rome and various Celtic tribes had begun to flourish, with a complex system of trade networks and treaties existing between them. It can be easy to imagine commerce between these two as a one-sided relationship whereby the barbarous Gauls coveted the riches of the Romans, but this was not the case. The Gauls profited greatly off Roman wine, but Rome also had much to gain in Celtic goods, from their excellent metalwork to other radical Gallic innovations... like the wooden barrel. And soap. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Latin and Celtic worlds would deteriorate once more in the 50s BC, when a certain Gaius Julius Caesar became governor of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, setting the stage for perhaps the single most iconic campaign of conquest in Roman history. What began, at least on paper, as an expedition to prevent the migration of hostile tribes into Roman territory soon evolved into the full-scale subjugation of the entire Gallic heartland, resulting in an immortal duel between the erstwhile Triumvir and the valiant Arverni Chieftain, Vercingetorix. This is the most famous clash between the Celtic and Roman worlds, but it is also the one we will devote the least time to in this video, as we have already made a 90-minute long documentary exhaustively covering it, which we will make available in the description below. Regardless, we all know how this story ends. When Vercingetorix rode out of Alesia and threw his arms at the feet of the Roman consul who had defeated him, the independence of the Gallic world had come to an end. By the year 50BC, the Gallic world of continental Europe had all but disappeared. The Celtic territories of Eastern and Central Europe that had not been subsumed by Rome were eventually replaced by waves of migration by the Dacians, Iranic Sarmatian pastoralists, and early Germanic tribes. The rest, of course, was now under the shadow of the Imperial Eagles' wing. Nevertheless, Celtic culture persisted for centuries under Roman rule, and in one foggy corner of the known world, they even retained their fierce independence.

4 Last Stand of Free Celts: Struggle Against the Roman Empire

In 122AD, a great wall was erected across northern Britain. To Emperor Hadrian, there was no prestige in this wall, as this symbol of Roman might represented a simple dichotomy: South of this wall was a tamed people who had settled into a life of docile Roman servitude, north of this wall were an unconquered people, who had never given up their tribal ways. In this fourth episode on the history of the ancient Celts, we will explore the lives of the Gauls under Roman rule, and tell the tale of the Romans in Britain, the final Celtic frontier. By 50BC, Celtic continental Europe had been brought under the Roman Eagle through no small cost of blood, but this was not the end of their story. The native Celtic population still vastly outnumbered the colonial Latin presence, and their still functioning infrastructure was co-opted into the new Roman system. Major Gallic hillfort sites like Condatum, Lutetia, Lugdunum, Mediolanum, Serdika, and Ankyra were all turned into Roman towns, as clusters of wattle and daub houses were replaced with gridded streets, public baths, and gymnasiums. Despite the new management, these cities still served as the power center of a local Gallic tribe, much like the old hill forts. Outside of the cities, life did not initially change much for the Celts. The majority of them had been rural farmers, and under Roman rule, they lived in the same tribal villages as their ancestors, speaking the same Celtic languages, and cultivating the same crops. To the Arvernian cooper or the Armorican shepherd, it must have made little difference whether they paid a portion of their labours to a torque-wearing chieftain or to a toga-clad governor. As a result, the majority of the Gallic population would not fully Latinize for centuries. The assimilation did occur relatively faster among the higher castes as the Romans focused on controlling their subject peoples from the top down. Many Celtic chieftains had been regularly interacting with Rome for centuries and had already developed a substantially Romanized material culture and this process sped up as many Gallic rulers sent their children off to receive a Roman education. The army served as another vehicle of assimilation, as Gauls who had been part of the aristocratic warrior caste signed up for the Legion as auxiliaries, which served as an acceptable substitute to the proud Celtic warrior tradition. They learned Latin and provided offerings to the Imperial cult shrines present at every castra fort. Upon their retirement, they earned full Roman citizenship, cementing their integrated role in Imperial society. Apart from the mandatory observance of the aforementioned Imperial cult- which held the Roman Emperors as divine beings to be revered, subject peoples were otherwise free to worship whatever deities they wished, resulting in Celtic polytheism surviving well into the Imperial era. Romans and Celts drew parallels between their Gods: the thunder god Taranis was associated with the Roman Jupiter, while the war-like tribal protector Toutatis was likened to Mars. Some Celtic deities even became adopted by the Roman population, such as the Horse-Goddess Epona, who became the patron of equestrians across the Empire. However, there were limits to this cohabitation. The Druids, for example, were often the target of Roman persecution. Their suppression began under the reign of Emperor Tiberius, and intensified under Emperor Claudius. Anti-Druidic policies were usually enacted under the pretext of ending ritual human sacrifice, but realistically, it was because the Druids threatened Roman control. Indeed, several Gallic rebellions were attributed to the seeds of discontent that Druids sowed from the shadows. Nevertheless, theirs was a clandestine order that proved hard to stamp out, and it

is exceedingly likely that for generations, the Druids secretly continued their teachings in hidden caves and secret forest clearings. During the reign of Claudius, select Gallic aristocrats were granted the privilege of joining the Roman Senate. Many snobbish senators protested this move fervently: how could the Emperor allow barbarians to sit amongst their hallowed ranks? In response, Claudius reminded them matter-of-factly that they themselves were the descendants of Umbrans, Sabines, and Samnites: Italic tribes the Romans had conquered and assimilated centuries earlier. To him, the Gauls were simply the latest in a long line of peoples to be integrated into the grand Imperial project. A shy and frail boy who struggled with a limp and a speech impediment, Claudius had stumbled into the Imperial purple through circumstance. But he was no fool and knew that in order to win the support of his soldiers, he needed to shake off his craven reputation and engage in a grand conquest like his dynastic ancestors. To that end, he chose the one land where the Celts had not yet been conquered. To the Romans of the 1st century AD, Britain was a land wreathed in the fog of mystery, full of long-haired savages with haunting blue tattoos that gave them the mien of vengeful spirits. This was not entirely the truth, for the Britons had never been isolated from the outside world, for centuries they had regularly traded and intermarried with their Celtic cousins on the continent, and Julius Caesar himself had dabbled in the whole invading Britain thing in 54 BC. It didn't accomplish much, but in the decades that followed, chieftains on the island's South-east edge had begun gravitating into the Roman sphere of influence. Despite this, the Britons' supernatural reputation remained, so when Claudius announced to his legions where they were going, they almost mutinied, unwilling to invade land they thought to be inhabited by cannibals, dark magics, and otherworldly monsters. Nevertheless, these fears were eventually quashed, and in 43AD, the battle for the final Celtic Frontier had begun. As many as 150,000 warriors came together to oppose the Roman landing, led by the brothers Togodumnus and Caratacus, chieftains of the Catuvellauni tribe. At the river Medway, they met their foe - four legions commanded by Claudius' top general Aulus Plautius. The Britons were defeated, and with initial resistance quashed, Claudius marched his army to the Catuvellauni capital of Camulodunum, which he rode into astride a mighty elephant in a display of Imperial prestige. Par for the course in Celtic history, disunity hampered the British war effort. Some tribes with already Roman-leaning leaders, like the Iceni, submitted quickly, and were allowed to retain limited independence as client Kings under Roman rule. Even the resistance leader Caratacus himself was captured by Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes, who handed him to the Romans in chains. However, resistance continued in the northwest, spearheaded by the Silures and Ordovices tribes, who used guerrilla hit-and-run tactics to stymy the Imperial advance for over a decade. Still, the Roman war machine proved relentless, and by 60AD, was encroaching upon the island of Ynys Mon, one of the most important religious sites in Britain, and home to the islands' Druidic order. Like their continental brothers, the Druids of Britain had been one of the primary driving forces of resistance against the Empire. When a Roman army led by Gaius Suetonius Paulinus arrived on the sacred isle, he came face to face with a line of chanting wizards clad in occult robes, standing behind wild priestesses wreathed in black, waving torches and screaming curses in the eerie Brythonic tongue. The extremely superstitious Legionaries stood paralyzed in utter terror at the magic of the druids. But Paulinus screamed courage into his men, and the Romans rallied, slaughtering all before them, and burning every sacred grove on the island to the ground. The scouring of the holiest site in Britain was meant to crush the native spirit, and yet the resistance continued, its torch passed on to an iconic warrior queen who needs no intro-

duction. In the English-speaking world, Boudicca of the Iceni is perhaps the single most famous Celtic figure in history, and her ruthless attempt to drive the Romans into the sea was the closest her people ever came to preserving their independence. But she too was defeated after a catastrophic massacre at Watling Street dealt upon by the Druid-burner Paulinus himself. Sporadic warfare continued for another twenty years, but by 80AD, Britain had been subdued. ...Or had it? Over centuries of Imperial occupation, formerly Celtic territories like Hispania and Gallia Transalpina had all become core domains of the Roman Empire. Roads, aqueducts, and grand cities increasingly connected these outlying territories to the Italian heartland. The Gallic language survived among the peasantry for a time, but the local nobles, subjected to centuries of Latin education, had become thoroughly Romanized in every meaningful way. Britain was different. As the Empires' furthest frontier territory, the Brythonic Celts never embraced the Roman identity as much as their cousins on the continent had. Of course, some did. The south and eastern edges saw substantial infrastructure spending that led to the development of Roman roads, villas, and cities like Londinium and Eboracum. The local elites here soon got with the program, embracing the Latin language as well as the trappings of Roman material culture. But this civilization existed on a gradient. If a man left the paved streets of Londinium and traveled north or west, the landscape would change. He would begin to see fewer castras and villas, and more wattle roundhouses in the environs of iron-age hillforts. The regions of what is now most of Northern England and Wales had been where anti-Roman resistance had been strongest, and though the natives here had no doubt been conquered, they never truly embraced the Roman way of life like their south-eastern kinsmen had. It was here that classical Celtic staples like La Tene artwork and the tribal lifestyle survived. For nearly the entirety of Imperial rule, these regions had to be kept under strict military occupation. But for all their independent spirit, these were not the last free Celts. Since the iron age, the northern half of the island of Britain, corresponding to modern Scotland and the northern extremity of modern England, had been home to many tribes, but the most powerful of these were the Caledoni, who lived in the highlands of modern Scotland. Their name was a proto-Celtic portmanteau meaning 'those with hard feet'. In later centuries, the Romans called them Picti- Latin for painted ones. 3,000 years ago, the first ancestors of the Celtic peoples had emerged in the idyllic mountains of what is now Austria. 1,000 years later and 1,300 miles away, amidst torrential rivers and rolling plains on the edge of the world, lay the final frontier of Celtic independence. The Caledonians first clashed with the Roman world around 81AD, during the offensive campaigns of the governor of Britannia Gnaeus Julius Agricola. Despite a characteristically fierce resistance led by their chieftain Calgacus, Agricola was able to make significant headways into the Caledonian territory, only to be recalled to Rome by Emperor Domitian before his conquests could be completed. Over the ensuing decades, the Caledonians mounted numerous attacks on the northernmost outposts of the empire. This became infuriating enough that in 122AD, Emperor Hadrian made the fateful decision to build his iconic border wall to fence them out. The Caledonians were not unconquerable, and Rome probably could have brought them to heel with enough time, effort, and blood. However, the far north of Britain was too far away from the Imperial heartland to rule effectively. Claudius had been pushing it by conquering southern Britain, large parts of which, as we covered earlier, remained loosely controlled at best. In the case of the Picts, it was better to just build a giant wall to keep them out of the civilized world entirely. That is not to say that future Emperors didn't try to conquer the north anyway. For centuries, the painted warriors beyond the wall were a thorn in

the Empires' side. As it turns out, Hadrian's wall only slowed them down, rather than stopping them entirely. Raids remained a constant problem, and the Picts sometimes aided tribes south of the wall in their constant rebellions. During the reign of Antoninus Pius, the Romans responded to this by invading Pictish territory once more, and erecting the Antonine wall. But this was abandoned a decade later, and the Romans fell back to Hadrian's old frontier. In 210AD, Emperor Septimius Severus tried his hand at taming the Picts, resulting in a brutal campaign in which his highland foes played a frustrating game of guerilla warfare. Here, Roman writer Cassius Dio claims they inflicted 50,000 Roman deaths through attrition alone. Severus later died of illness in Eboracum, and his son Caracalla forged a peace with the natives, forcing the Romans to once more retreat to Hadrians' line. The Picts were not the only Celts of late antiquity to be free of Roman rule. It is now we take a brief detour to Ireland, home to a subculture of the Celts known as the Gaels. The Gaels have so far assumed a background role in our series, isolated as they were on their remote island, far away from the concerns of classical Greco-Roman writers. Generally speaking, the Romans showed little interest in the Gaelic homeland, which they called Hibernia. Although, when Agricola was invading the Caledonians, he also made preparations to launch an invasion across the Irish sea, but those probably never materialized. Like northern Britain, Ireland was too remote to be worth conquering. Being a land of wild forests, deadly bogs, and belligerent war-like tribesmen, it wasn't exactly prime real estate anyway. With that said, the island was not entirely isolated from the ancient world. It was a common destination for Brittonic tribes fleeing Roman rule, and the discovery of Roman artifacts in the area has led modern archaeologists to believe that regular trade probably occurred across the Irish sea. The Gaels could also be quite pestiferous, one of their tribes, the Scotti, were basically sea pirates that regularly raided the western coast of Britain. And yet, despite some trade links and a sprinkle of maritime war crimes, the Irish Gaels would not take center stage in the history of the Celts until after the departure of the Romans from Britain, which is something we will get into in the next chapter of this series. Our story now shifts back to the east, as we set the stage for the final twilight of Gallic culture in continental Europe. From the 3rd century AD, a new faith had taken the Empire by storm; whose practitioners worshipped a strange Levantine prophet that the Romans themselves had put to death 200 years earlier. The Christian faith spread rapidly through the provinces, first as a persecuted underground cult, and then through a remarkable turn of fortunes, the state religion of the Empire. Imperial opinions towards old gods quickly soured, and by 392 AD, the devoutly Christian Emperor Theodosius banned all pagan practices entirely. This was probably the death knell of whatever remained of traditional Celtic polytheism on the continent. The next century would see the end of the world that the Gallo-Romans had lived under for generations. After the conquest of the Celts, the Germanic peoples had become the principal "barbarian" enemy of Rome. For centuries, many of their tribes had traded, integrated, or more often, warred with Romans along the frontier of the Rhine and Danube rivers. In many ways, the 400sCE was the Germanic century, as peoples like the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Franks took advantage of Imperial decay to pour into Roman territory and carve out Kingdoms for themselves, thereby bringing an end to the western half of the Empire. As the Germanic invaders of Europe settled into their newly conquered lands, they found themselves living amongst the direct descendants of Chieftains and Druids, men who had once called themselves warriors of the Senones, Insubres, Boii, and Arverni. But these people had been forever changed. Indeed, by the time the Western Roman Empire collapsed, the Celts of continental Europe had been

under Latin hegemony for over 400 years, and Gaulish culture had become little more than an echo. Its ancient cults had been replaced by a monotheistic God from the Levant, and its language slowly declining in favour of the dialects of Vulgar Latin that would evolve into today's modern Romance languages. It is possible that the Gaulish language survived in some isolated mountain villages as late as the 6th century AD, but as late antiquity transitioned into the middle ages, the Celtic identity had all but faded away, and a hybrid Germanic-Latin custom would be predominant culture upon which most of the Kingdoms of Early Medieval Europe were formed. Yet, on some far-flung islands on the edge of Europe, the ancient culture of Europe's most enigmatic peoples survived. After the fall of Rome, Britain was the last bastion of the Celts in Europe. But as the Empire retreated from Albion's shores, it left the land vastly different from how it found it. In the south and east, a cast of Christian, Romanized Britons clung to the memory of the Emperors who had long abandoned them. In the north, the unconquered Picts and Gaels now stood poised to invade their acculturated cousins, eager to pick at riches left behind by the dead monster that was Rome. But as the last Celts of Europe geared up to fight one another, a new threat was emerging from the east. From the shores of the north sea, hardened men were nearing the coast of Britain, with the hammer of Thunor hung around their necks, and a prayer to Woden on their lips. The British battle royale was about to begin.

5 Ancient Celts: Anglo-Saxon Invasion of Britain DOCUMENTARY

In the 5th century AD, Britain was the last bastion of Celtic culture in Europe. But even this island stronghold would soon be under threat, and the Britons of the Age of Arthur would soon find themselves swept up in an era of chaos, invasion, heroism and loss. In 410AD, Alaric and his Goths became the first foreign army to sack Rome since Brennus and the Senones Gauls did so 800 years earlier. That same year, the crippled Empire pulled the last of their legions out of Britain, never to return, and for the first time in 400 years, all of Albion, for better or worse, was free. The centuries immediately after this departure are known as “Sub-Roman Britain.” As the Romans took with them their habit of thorough record keeping, this era is largely shrouded in mystery. One thing we know is that even after centuries of Latin occupation, Celtic society was alive and well in Britain, enjoying a better fate than its continental cousins. From Cornwall to the Forth-Clyde, the language of Queen Boudicca survived as a variety of P-Celtic dialects broadly classified as “Common Brythonic.” Meanwhile, the Q-Celtic tongue of Gaelic continued to thrive in Ireland. Finally, in the Scottish Highlands, the Picts howled their war cries with words that distantly related to the tongues to their South. It is also likely that in more urbanized areas, a form of Latin was still in use as one of the many remnants of Britain’s recent Imperial past. Indeed, many Britons had grown exceedingly accustomed to Roman comforts and those habits persisted even after Rome’s departure. But how ‘Roman’ was sub-Roman Britain? Robin Fleming, author of *Britain after Rome*, poignantly describes this post-Imperial world to us: “In the year 420, there were still people in Britain who had been born in a world shaped by the structure of Empire, people whose early lives had been ordered by Rome’s material culture. There were those whose childhood dinners had been served on pewter and glass, and middle aged men who had been raised in heated villas.” Britain had once been connected to a continent spanning Empire whose infrastructure brought them the luxuries of Italy, Egypt and Syria, allowing many Romanized Britons to enjoy an aristocratic station in countryside villas and wealthy cities. But when Rome left, so too did the means to make this way of life possible. Archaeological evidence suggests that in the 5th century, the old world order began rapidly collapsing, as former Roman cities either drastically shrunk in size or became ghost towns, while the majority of the islands’ villas were abandoned. As Romanitas decayed, older Celtic traditions emerged from its carcass. Some Britons seem to have moved back into ancient Celtic hill forts, which had stood abandoned for centuries during Roman rule. This massive shift in standard of living probably hit the south and east the hardest. The transition was probably easier for the Britons of the north and the west, who had never been particularly Romanized. It also stands to reason that the Picts and Gaels, who for the most part had always been on the outside looking in, experienced barely any change to their daily lives in this era. However, we should be mindful of the possibility that the Roman lifestyle did not vanish from Britain as quickly as previously thought. The archaeological record suggests that in the 5th century, traders from as far away as Byzantium and North Africa still braved the long journey, most likely due to the Islands’ valuable tin deposits. It therefore is likely that, for a time, some Romano-Britons used this limited foreign trade to maintain a pale imitation of Roman life. Material culture was not the only aspect of Celtic society undergoing a metamorphosis. In centuries past, Roman Britain had been a land of many Gods. Native Celtic deities were worshipped alongside Greco-Latin ones, while Gods

from the furthest edge of the known world established mystery cults in Britain. These included Isis, an Egyptian goddess, and Mithras, an Iranian God who became popular among Romano-British soldiers. However, by far the most successful religion the Romans introduced to Britain was that of the Levantine carpenter. Christianity arrived on the isle as early as the 200sAD, and by the time Rome abandoned Britain, had become the dominant religion. While the cross spread rapidly through the British isles, those who lived there never truly forgot their polytheist roots. Even under the pressure of increasing Christian zealotry, pagan cults probably survived throughout and beyond the 5th century. There may even have been some Druidic circles still practicing their occult rites in secluded groves, longing for a return of the old ways. Many Celts also incorporated the rituals of their ancestors into their newly Christian lives. One example of this lies in Ireland, where the Spring Goddess Brigid was rebranded as the exalted St. Brigid, patron of Ireland. Her feast day coincides with Imbolc, a pagan festival celebrating the coming of Spring. Other pagan rites survived Christianization as well, such as the balefires of Beltane and Samhain, where Brythonic and Gaelic peoples alike would thin the lines between themselves and the otherworld, known either as Annwn or Tír na nÓg: the land where the faerie folk dwelled. In the wake of Roman departure, Britain became a patchwork of petty Kingdoms. Remarkably, many of these Kingdoms appear to have been formed upon pre-Roman tribal lines, as ancient iron-age identities re-emerged. Most of these realms are poorly represented in the historical record, but others, such as Powys, Dumnonia, Gwynedd and Strathclyde are better attested to by virtue of having endured well into the middle ages, as opposed to the ones extinguished much earlier on by a certain wave of Germanic migrations. Our main primary source on the wars of this era come from an early 6th century monk known as Gildas. His work, titled *De Excidio et Conquestu Britaaniae*, or “On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain”, tells a vivid story of chaos and invasions. *De Excidio* was not written by a trained historian, but by a devout Christian clergyman writing a religious polemic. Nevertheless, since Gildas’ work is the by far the most intact source from this era, historians still find themselves reliant on the old monk’s writings. His recounting of the 5th century begins with a scene of immediate havoc: “No sooner were the Romans gone, than the Picts and the Scots, like worms which in the heat of mid-day came forth. inspired with the same avidity for blood.” At this time, the Picts and Scots were probably still predominantly pagan, which would explain why Gildas speaks of them so scathingly. The monk’s story continues when the Romano-Christian Britons, beset upon by the relentless raiding of their savage cousins, sent a plea to the declining Roman Empire. “The barbarians drive us to the sea; the sea throws us back on the barbarians: thus two modes of death await us, we are either slain or drowned.” Of course, the Romans, only a few decades away from the final collapse of their Empire, could offer no salvation. Gildas’ tells a visceral tale. But his narrative of a victimized Christian people in the face of pagan barbarity most likely tilted. The Romano-Britons were probably just as warlike as their Celtic cousins, all too willing to invade their neighbours, regardless of the shared culture, language, or faith. With that said, there is some truth to the monks’ tale. The Gaelic peoples seem to have established colonial realms in the west coast of Britain from the late 4th century onwards. In most of these, they appear to have merged into the culture of the local Brythonic peoples. But in the Kingdom of Dál Riata, founded by the Scotii warriors of Ulster, they began a slow cultural assimilation of the local Picts. Consequently, the modern nation of Scotland derives its name from the Scotii tribe, and the Scottish Gaelic language still spoken in the country today is a remnant of those Irish roots. However, it would be neither Pict nor Gael

that would be the ultimate game-changers of Sub-Roman Britain. What exactly defines an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ is a heated historiographic debate, but broadly speaking, they were a diverse amalgamation of tribes from Scandinavian and North German coastline, primarily consisting of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes. They were hardy warriors who spoke North Germanic languages and worshipped a pagan pantheon similar to the one made famous by the Norse Vikings centuries later. Amongst scholarly circles, the ‘whens’ ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of the Germanic migrations are topics of intense debate. According to Gildas, the burden of the Saxon tide falls upon the historically dubious Romano-British king named Vortigern. His reign was a tumultuous one, faced with hordes of marauding Pictish raiders, Vortigern was forced to turn to soldiers of fortune from overseas. Accordingly, help came from the Germanic warriors of the North sea, led by the Jutish brothers Hengist and Horsa. Gildas colours us with his opinion on this hiring: “the British King and his councillors were so blinded, that as a protection to their country, they sealed its doom by inviting wolves into the sheepfold: the fierce and impious Saxons, a race hateful to both God and men.” Tradition has it that in the year 449, the brothers defeated the Picts, then promptly betrayed their Romano-British hosts, conquering a swath of south-eastern Britain that would become the Kingdom of Kent. More Germanic migrants would follow in the brothers’ wake, and by 500, it seemed as if the western half of England was firmly in Angle, Saxon, or Jutish hands. These territories became known to the Celtic Britons as ‘Lloegyr’: the lost lands. It was likely around this time that some Britons who lived on the islands’ southwest began taking to the seas in flight from the Germanic invaders. They established themselves in the Armorican peninsula, the first of several waves of settlers to arrive in the region. Thus the peninsula became known as Brittany, after the Britons who settled it. Anecdotally, a region that had been Celtic-speaking in ancient times, but was then thoroughly Latinized by the Roman Empire, was re-Celticized by British refugees centuries later, and retains its Celtic language and identity to this day. The Saxons had established themselves in Britain, but it appears that for a time, the natives were able to keep them contained by winning a series of military victories, led, if the legend is to be believed, by a certain Dux Bellorum named Arthur. Herein lies the great mystery. Was Arthur a real historical figure? If he did exist, it was not amongst the knights, wizards, and castles of the high Medieval era, but the spears and hillforts of Sub-Roman Britain. The name first appears in a 6th century compendium of Welsh poems known as the Gododdin. Here, a Briton hero named Guaurdus was described as “Not Arthur, amongst equals in might of feats.” This line implies that Arthur was a well-known figure to the 6th century Celts, and was considered the benchmark for heroism in his age. Nennius, a Welsh monk writing in the 9th century, attributed twelve great battles to the semi-mythical warlord, the most triumphant one occurring in the early 500s AD at a place called Mynydd Badon, generally considered to be modern day Bath. Leading warriors’ from across the Brythonic Kingdoms, the warlord of legend vanquished an army led by King Aelle of the South Saxons, thereby breaking Germanic power in Britain, and delaying their advance for an entire generation. With that said, Nennius’ accounts should be taken with a mountain of salt, as there is very little evidence that anyone named Arthur fought in any of the battles mentioned. Gildas, writing far closer to the time period in question, attributes Briton victory at Mynydd Badon not to Arthur, but to a Romanized commander named Ambrosius Aurelianus. With that said, when myth and folklore are stripped away, it does seem that with or without Arthurs’ help, the Britons were able to fend off the Anglo-Saxons, albeit only temporarily. Within a few decades of Mynydd Badon, the Anglo-Saxons had evidently recovered, with powerful Kingdoms established

deep in Lloegyr, straddling the borders of unconquered Celtic lands. The Angles and Saxons who lived in these Kingdoms were no longer transient invaders, but had lived in Britain for generations, working the same land their fathers and grandfathers had. In short, they were there to stay. Thus, in the second half of the 6th century, the forebears of the English began to push westwards once more, marching boldly into the lands of the men they called Wealas- foreigners. In 577 AD, one King Ceawlin of the nascent Kingdom of Wessex met three British Kings: Conmail, Condidan, and Farinmail, in a battle at Hinton Hill near the modern township of Dyrham. Saxons routed the Celtic warriors, and as a result, Ceawlin was able to expand his territories right onto the Severn Estuary, severing the land connection between the Britons of Cornwall and Wales. This invariably led to a cultural drift between newly separated Celtic territories, resulting in the Common Brittonic spoken in those regions evolving into the separate languages of Cornish and Welsh. A few decades after the triumph of Saxon Wessex, the Angles of the North began a campaign of their own. King Æthelfrith of Bernicia carved a bloody path of Conquest deep into northern Brythonic Kingdoms like Rheged, Elmet, and Goddodin, and crushed the Gaelic King Áedán mac Gabráin of Dál Riata at the battle of Deksastan in 603AD, establishing the Angles as the most dominant people north of the Humber. It must be noted that, in the land conquered by Germanic peoples, native Celtic culture was likely not entirely wiped away. The names of English Kingdoms like Bernicia and Kent have Celtic origins, and some Briton blood likely ran through the veins of their earliest Kings. The remains of brooch jewelry found in early Saxon graves have shown that the early Germanic settlers borrowed from the artistic traditions of the Britons. As for the Britons themselves, those who lived in Lloegyr were slowly assimilated into Anglo-Saxon culture over many generations. The line between Saxon and Celt was often more blurred than we think. Nevertheless, a frontier still existed between communities who spoke old English, and communities that spoke Brittonic and Gaelic. By the dawn of the 7th century, this frontier had become more or less entrenched, and would not move in any dramatic way for centuries. Be it by Roman or Germanic invaders, the Celts had lost much over the last thousand years or so. One can only wonder if a Welsh bowman in the 6th century AD, looking across a dyke at a line of Saxon spears, would have been remotely aware of the fact that his ancestors' culture had once spread across an entire continent, a culture that was now confined to the westernmost edge of Britain. The days when Gallic hordes marched into the heart of Greece or dueled Roman legions from Spain to Turkey were long gone. But, as territorially diminished as the Celts were, they would not go quietly into the night. As late antiquity transitioned into the middle ages, the stage was set for Europe's most enigmatic people to make their mark upon the Medieval world. In the east, the ancestral home of the Brythonic peoples had fallen to Saxon invaders, but in the west, the heirs of Arthur would defy the rule of the nascent English people for centuries yet. Thus, the history of Medieval Wales and her sister states in Cornwall, Brittany, and Yr Hen Ogledd began. Meanwhile, with howling Picts and Northumbrians on their doorstep, the Gaels of Dal Riata would write their own saga of blood and battle, eventually giving rise to the Kingdom of Scotland. Finally, across the narrow sea, Ireland would remain a relatively isolated land of internecine chieftains. But in time, the outside world would come knocking on their door, in the form of Vikings, Normans, and beyond. Indeed, the story of the Celts is not yet over.

6 King Arthur: Historical Roots - Medieval History DOCUMENTARY

Few legends are as ubiquitous across the English-speaking world as that of Arthur, King of the Britons. Everyone knows something about Arthurian legend, whether through childhood storybooks or numerous adaptations. Less well known, however, is the fact that the version of King Arthur we all know is not the original one. Hidden amongst the gold-plated knights and Christian artifacts of the High Medieval canon are remnants of a much more archaic tale, with its foundations amongst the history and pagan folklore of the Ancient Celts of Britain. We will explore the roots of the legend, and try to figure out if Arthur was a real historical figure. The version of the Arthurian myth that most people know is the one developed in the High Middle Ages. So, before we get into the deepest roots of Arthurian history, let us summarize the evolution of the medieval legend we are all familiar with. In 1136, British monk Geoffrey of Monmouth finished his magnum opus, a Latin chronicle titled ‘The History of the Kings of Britain’. This tome begins by claiming the first King of Britain was a Trojan named Brutus who slew the island’s native Giant population, then tells a warped version of the Roman conquest and rule over the island. A few chapters later, Geoffrey mentions the prophetic sermon of a certain magician named Merlin, who uses his magic to facilitate the rise of the mighty Uther Pendragon to the British throne. Uther’s reign is spent fighting the principal foreign invaders of his era, the Saxons. But later on, he falls in love with his chief rival’s beautiful wife, utilizing Merlin’s shapeshifting magic to couple with her, thereby producing a bastard child named Arthur. Eventually, Arthur succeeds his father and grows up to be a fine warrior, known for wielding the legendary sword Caliburn. Taking up the burden of the fight against the Saxons, our titular hero subsequently trounces the Saxon King Cerdic at the battle of Badon. After this, Arthur marries the beautiful Guinevere, then departs to conquer a huge chunk of Europe. Geoffrey rounds off his tale when Arthur’s nephew, Mordred, manages to seduce Guinevere and usurp the British throne, forcing the king to return home and duel his treacherous relative, where they both seem to have been fatally wounded at the battle of Camlann. While Geoffrey wasn’t the oldest historical chronicler to write about Arthur himself, but with him, Arthurian canon as we know it today first took shape, forged with the inaugural appearance of characters such as Merlin, Guinevere, and the iconic sword Caliburn- known later as Excalibur. At the time of Historia Regnum Britanniae’s completion and translation, the culture of Christian nobility was undergoing a metamorphosis. The 12th century had seen an influx of social influence from the Islamic world from the Crusades and the Reconquista. This had ultimately given rise to rituals of ‘courtly love’ throughout the nobility, particularly in the French-speaking world. Consequently, tales of Arthur captured the public imagination. Enter the French poet Chrétien de Troyes, who, inspired by the works of Monmouth, composed his own anthology of Arthurian tales between the 1170s and 1190s. While Monmouth’s attempted to cobble together a credible historical chronicle, de Troyes’ works read like a blockbuster action-adventure, abound with heart-thumping romances, beautiful maidens, and daring duels. It was in the Frenchman’s writings that knights such as Gawain, Percival, and Lancelot first appear in the high medieval canon. Perhaps the Frenchman’s greatest contribution, however, comes in his unfinished Perceval, the Story of the Grail. In it, the young knight Perceval encounters the mysterious “Fisher King”, ostensibly named because of his fondness for fishing. Perceval lodges in his home, which happens to be a

mysterious castle of delights where time seems to stand still. There, Perceval encounters a procession of beautiful youths carrying a series of magnificent yet mysterious objects: a bloody lance, a set of ornate candelabras, and finally, a shallow dish, which de Troyes called *un graal*. This marks the first time that the Grail appears in the Arthurian canon, although it isn't holy yet. Over the next few centuries, various authors added bits and pieces to the developing canon, during which, the Christianization of key themes in the Arthurian mythos became common. This is particularly evident in Robert de Boron's Joseph of Arimathea, which reinterpreted the grail as the chalice that the titular Saint Joseph used to catch the last drops of Jesus' blood as he hung on the cross. The next major development came in the 13th century, when the anonymously authored Vulgate Cycle expanded on the quest for the now definitely holy grail, this time with Lancelot and Gawain on its sanctified trail. It is here that Arthurian Romance as we know it today was more or less fully developed. But as we stated in the beginning, these Medieval authors were not the true originators of the Arthurian mythos. To discover those origins, we must jump back nearly a thousand years, to an era of British history shrouded almost entirely in mystery. The year is now 500AD, and Britain is inhabited principally by the titular "Britons", an indigenous Celtic people, who up until recently were subjects of Rome, an Empire that had abandoned them. In the 5th and 6th centuries, social collapse was the order of the day. No longer supported by the infrastructure of the Empire, the most Romanized of the Britons were forced to abandon their heated villas and gridded towns and revert to a more rugged style of living, while politically the island fractured into petty kingdoms ruled by warlords, for whom life was cheap and blood flowed freely. To top off an already terrible situation, Germanic tribes like the Angles, Saxons, Frisians, and Jutes had left their homelands, and through a mix of conquest and assimilation of the local Romano-Britons, slowly became the masters of eastern Britain, eventually becoming the forebears of the modern English people. Meanwhile, the native Celts who insisted on retaining their culture retreated to the hilly western regions of the island, eventually becoming the ancestors of the modern Welsh people. It is in this era that Arthur first emerges, as a pseudo-historical warlord fighting against the Saxons. The name first appears in a 6th-century compendium of Welsh poems known as the Gododdin. Here, a Briton hero named Guaudur was described as "Not Arthur, amongst equals in the might of feats." This line implies that Arthur was a well-known figure to the 6th century Celts, and was considered the benchmark for heroism in his age. Between the 7th and 10th centuries, the borders with the Anglo-Saxons Kingdoms had more or less crystallized. Although the Britons had lost much of what would become England, they retained their independence throughout much of Cornwall, Cumbria, and Wales, and had even managed to establish states in Brittany. As the age of Saxon invasions faded into generational memory, it became remembered as an era of epic legend. In the courts of the Celtic Kingdoms, highly respected Bards composed literary epics of warriors who performed great acts of heroism while fighting the Saxons. Meanwhile, monks in Welsh monasteries chronicled the history of their Kings in old Welsh, and it is in these enigmatic pages that we can find the more archaic, 'original' Arthur. Other than extremely fragmentary early poems like Gododdin, the oldest surviving account of Arthur in Celtic literature lies in Nennius, a Welsh monk who lived in the 800s. His work Historia Brittonum, depicts Arthur as a glory-bound leader who bore the title Dux Bellorum, a Roman word roughly translating to "general" or "warlord". Nennius ascribes twelve great battles to Arthur, who leads the Romano-Britons to victory against not just the Saxons, but also their Celtic cousins from Scotland and Ireland. This all culminates in the Dux's

ultimate triumph at the Battle of Badon, where Arthur crushes the Saxons so decisively that he eradicates their hold over Britain for an entire generation. Another manuscript that seems to back up Nennius' testimony of Arthur's deeds is the "Annales Cambriae", a compilation of old Welsh genealogies compiled around the 10th century. The Annals speak of the battle of Badon, dating it to 514AD. It also briefly mentions Arthur's end, claiming that in 537 AD, he and Mordred fell in the strife of Camlann. These accounts also line up with those of the aforementioned Geoffrey of Monmouth, writing centuries later. A theme worth noting in these texts is the more 'untamed' version of Arthur they depict, in contrast to his depiction in the Medieval canon. While Geoffrey preserved Arthur's warrior spirit, the medieval French Romances that followed depict Arthur more as a regal, castle-bound monarch. Meanwhile, the Welsh Arthur evokes the gritty imagery of a blood-soaked, battle-hardened warlord. Many other prominent characters appearing in the Medieval works also have potential roots in older Celtic literature. The most obvious example of this lies in the medieval Welsh poem, Peredur, son of Eframwg, whose main character and story beats seem to resemble Chretien's Percival, the Story of the Grail. Although actually not much older than Chretien's story, the Welsh Peredur is nevertheless theorized to be directly derived from the same ancient Welsh folk story that Chretien based the Percival romance on. Another place where we can draw these types of parallels lies another Welsh poem: how Culhwch won Olwen. In it, Culhwch, son of King Cilydd of Celyddon, is bound by a curse to never marry, lest it is to the beautiful Olwen, daughter of the mighty Giant Ysbaddadan. To that end, Culhwch rides to the court of his cousin, the battle-chief Arthur, to ask for aid in winning his beloved's hand. Arthur pledges to help his wayward kinsman, so he and his best men join Culhwch's cause. Among these men are the warriors Gwalchmai, Cai and Bedwyr. Together, they ride for Ysbaddadan's castle, where the Giant king has them complete a set of 'impossible' tasks as a condition for giving up his daughter's hand in marriage. At some point, Ysbaddadan demands that Culhwch and Arthur fetch for him the prized, pseudo-magical cauldron of Diwrnach, steward of the King of Ireland, and possibly also a Giant. Although originally received as guests by the Irish, hostilities quickly bubble once Arthur's men try to take the cauldron. As a fight breaks out, one of Arthur's warriors, Llenlleog, grasps Arthur's sword Caledfwlch, and uses it to slay Diwrnach and all his men. Subsequently, they return to Britain with the cauldron in hand. A few more episodes of epic adventure follow, culminating in Culhwch eventually obtaining Olwen's hand in marriage, and ostensibly living happily ever after. We can see clear similarities between the story of How Culhwch won Olwen, and the high Medieval Arthurian romances of later centuries. For one, Arthur's warriors in Culhwch seem to be an archaic Welsh version of the Knights of the Round Table. Gwalchmai is an earlier version of Sir Gawain, while Bedwyn and Cai are linked to Sir Bedivere and Sir Kay, who feature in the stories of Geoffrey of Monmouth and Chretien de Troyes. More dubiously, the Irish-slaying warrior Llenlleog has been theorized to be the root for none other than Lancelot. In addition to this, Culhwch's saga is where Arthur's legendary sword Excalibur makes one of its earliest appearances in extant literature under its original name, Caledfwlch, which might just be the old Welsh word for "Sword". As generations passed, the histories and sagas left behind by the early medieval Welsh were preserved through manuscript or oral tradition. These stories eventually fell into the hands of the High Medieval authors. Thus, Celtic warriors and magic cauldrons eventually became chivalrous Knights and Holy Grails. On that note, let us examine another angle by which we can examine the Celtic origins of Arthurian Romance: the relicts of Celtic paganism still extant in the high medieval stories.

Although by the 6th century AD the Britons were a predominantly Christian people, the stories they told still featured ancient Celtic themes, such as magic cauldrons, enchanted boars, and capricious pagan gods. These magical elements spotlighted heavily in early Welsh Arthurian literature, and accordingly were then brought into the Latin and French Romances, where their pagan roots were whitewashed and replaced with Christianized backstories. The poster child for this retconning is none other than Merlin. In the 13th century, French poet de Boron found Merlin's unexplained magic powers unsuitable for his Christian sensibilities. Thus, he explained that the sorcerer must have been born as a biblical demon, only to have his evil nature washed away by baptism, allowing him to keep his magic without becoming the antichrist. De Boron had effectively rewritten Merlin so that the Christians could understand and accept him, but the sorcerer's true origins have little to do with Christian scripture. Most of the academia agrees that Merlin's origins lie mainly in Myrddin Wyllt, a mysterious character who appears in the *Annales Cambriae* and across several fragmentary Welsh poems. From what we know of Myrddin, he was some sort of bard, who upon witnessing the bloody battle of Arfderydd in 573AD, went mad and fled into the forest, where he lived amongst the beasts and received the gift of prophecy, invoking the imagery of a classic pagan Druid- the caste of priests who had been the lorekeepers of Celtic peoples since ancient times. Pagan roots and Christianization can also be applied to the Holy Grail, which is often compared to the quintessential magic cauldron of celtic mythology. Originally associated with the goddess Cerridwen, enchanted cauldrons feature several times throughout the Welsh Arthurian tales. To find the one that inspired the holy grail, we must look at the story of Branwen, Daughter of Llyr. This tale features a magic cauldron capable of bringing dead warriors back to life, which is in the possession of an implicitly magical Giant-King Brân the Blessed, who was mortally wounded in the foot while committing casual acts of genocide in Ireland. Meanwhile, in de Troyes' Story of the Grail, the Grail is a supernatural serving dish of sorts capable of miraculous acts of healing. It is in the possession of a mysterious, implicitly magical monarch known as the Fisher King, who also suffers chronically from a wound to the leg. Obviously, there are significant parallels between the magic cauldron of resurrection in the Branwen story, and the grail of Chrétien de Troyes' story, making the case for the Grail's literary origins as a magic cauldron even stronger. Of course, de Boron would later erode away the Grail's implied pagan origins much as he did with Merlin, this time by shackling its backstory to Christian Saints and the Blood of Jesus Christ. Having thoroughly examined the origins of Arthurian Romance and its roots in Celtic folklore, is it possible to confirm whether or not there is any solid, historical truth within the legends? Unfortunately, the answer is probably not. All historians can confidently determine is that if he did exist, it was probably in 500 AD, during Sub-Roman Britain and the age of migrations. Over the centuries, many people have postulated theories on the conditions under which a 'real' Arthur might have existed during this era, depicting him as everything from a pagan Irish warlord, to a Roman General, to a Sarmatian horselord. However, the fact of the matter is none of these theories have enough evidence to stand on, as almost none of the historical Arthurian literature we have today was actually written in the era that he was supposed to have lived in. Naturally, the French-Latin Medieval Stories of the 12th to 15th centuries are decidedly unhelpful in deciphering a 'real' historical figure, as they have distorted their original Celtic source material beyond recognition, and are at least 700 years removed from Arthur's 500 AD time slot. Even the more archaic Welsh texts are historically dubious, as although they were written closer to the so-called "Age of Arthur", the oldest

of them still only appear a few centuries after his time, plenty of time for historical fact to distort into lore and legend- which clearly happened, given all the supernatural, magical elements in the Welsh Arthurian tales. So to summarize, it seems as if Arthur occupies a similar historiographic space as the works of Homer, such as the Iliad. Iconic tales of an era long gone, featuring quasi-historical themes, locations, and events, but untangleable from the magic and mythology woven into its fabric as the story is retold generation after generation. We will never know if there was ever a true Arthur, but he was real to the Medieval Courtiers of 14th century France, who modeled their acts of courtly virtue upon the lessons his stories set. He was real to the 9th century Welsh Shepherds of Powys and Gwynedd, who saw in him their direct ancestor- and a symbol of glory days gone by. Finally, while we may have dismissed his existence in our modern world, the impact that the seminal King of the Britons has had on our culture and social memory will, for centuries yet, remain very real indeed.

7 Celtic Britons: the Origins of Medieval Wales - Middle Ages DOCUMENTARY

J.R.R. Tolkien once remarked: “Welsh is of this soil, this island, the senior language of the men of Britain; Welsh is beautiful.” Today, Wales is seen as the sleepy, rural periphery of the United Kingdom, but deeply rooted in its idyllic rolling hills is the vibrant history of the Celtic Britons, a people who have had as many mighty warlords as they have pages of beautiful poetry. Even today, in a world so thoroughly dominated by a Globalized English language, Wales retains its ancient culture, folklore, and unique tongue. Welcome to our second series on the Celtic peoples of Europe, where we will explore the Medieval History of the land where Dragons roam. The Celtic peoples have inhabited the British isles since antiquity, but for the first four centuries of the common era, they did so under the overlordship of the Roman Empire. After Imperial authority collapsed, and the last legions departed from the island in 410 AD, a new form of occupier would take root in Britain. Throughout the 5th and 6th centuries AD, Germanic tribes like the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians began making increasing headway into the isle. Whether this was defined by large-scale invasion or by relatively peaceful assimilation is still up for debate. However, it is in this murky era that the legend of King Arthur is historically rooted. In any case, by 600 AD, the eastern lowlands of Britain were dominated by the Germanic ancestors of the English, while Celtic-speaking polities, the ancestors of the Welsh, were pushed into the western highlands. Throughout medieval history, there was never a single Welsh state, but rather, a multitude of smaller kingdoms united culturally, through a shared corpus of folklore and similar languages. These small polities were not just localized to what is now modern Wales, but also in parts of what is now England and the Scottish Lowlands, where proto-Welsh Kingdoms endured well into the middle ages. It also bears mentioning that the Welsh, who we will refer to interchangeably as the Britons, Brittonic, Brythonic, or Cumbric peoples, were not the only Celtic-speaking polities in the middle ages. In Ireland, the Gaels predominated, from where they spread to the Scottish Highlands, competing with the local Pictish tribes for dominance. Another medieval Celtic land of note is the French peninsula of Brittany. Culturally and linguistically closely related to the Welsh, the Bretons maintained their political autonomy from their Frankish and Norman neighbors for centuries, while maintaining regular contact with their cousins across the channel. Before we get into the history of Medieval Wales, let us briefly explore their culture and society. In the overall landscape of early Britain in the middle ages, the cultural achievements of the Celtic Britons are often sidelined in order to focus on those of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms or, later, the Norse invaders. Undeservedly so, for in contrast to the common narrative which portrays them as the poorest periphery of Britain, the Welsh possessed as much high culture as anywhere else in Europe at the time. Old Welsh poetry, for example, is extremely extensive and complex. Any fans of modern western fantasy will likely be familiar with the archetype of the “Bard”, which was originally an ancient Celtic, and later Medieval Welsh word. Throughout the Brythonic world, Bards were highly respected, and often invited to the courts of Kings to compose grand epics which would glorify that monarch. Some Bards would themselves become legends of great renown, such as Aneirin and Taliesin, two sixth century poets whose wide corpus of works include everything from epic poems of great battles, to children’s lullabies. Their works survive to this day, albeit not in their original forms. Editorially, it can be said that what Homer was to the Greeks, Aneirin

and Taliesin were to the Welsh. Another accomplished pillar of medieval Welsh society was its Church. Christianity had taken root in Britain during the Late Roman Empire, and by the 6th century AD had become the predominant faith among the Celtic Britons. Welsh Christianity had its own local flavour, by virtue of its home-bred saints. Originally, these saints were Britons who had lived during Roman rule and had been martyred by the Augusti for their faith, such as St. Alban. However, after the Roman departure, British Saints often took on the form of pious royalty, such as St. Cybi, a Prince of Cornwall who supposedly went on pilgrimage all the way to Jerusalem, and upon his return, turned down his rightful throne to instead preach and build Churches throughout the realm. Holy sites to various Celtic Saints dotted the lands of the Medieval Cumbrian peoples, and pilgrimages to them were regularly made by the common people. Between the 6th and 8th centuries, Celtic Christianity was fairly isolated from its mother Church in Rome, and thus developed certain schismatic beliefs, such as a different method in calculating the date of Easter. However, by the 9th century, these schisms had largely been healed due to kings like Cyngen ap Cadell of Powys who were recorded to have made pilgrimages to Rome. It should also be noted that, between the 5th and 7th centuries AD, interactions between the Britons and their Anglo-Saxon neighbours were often tinged with religious tension, for the former were largely Christian, while the latter still held to a pantheon of Pagan Gods similar to the ones made famous by the Norse Vikings in later centuries. However, by the 700s AD, the forebears of the English had embraced Roman Christianity. What we have thus far covered of early Welsh society barely scratches the surface of its depth and complexity, and there is much more that can be explored, such as their nuanced legal codes, refined artwork, and sophisticated court culture, but for brevity's sake, we will now have to move on. Let us now take a tour of western Britain in the sixth and seventh centuries, and examine how the Cymric peoples from Somerset to Lanarkshire interacted with the various Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms to their immediate east. In doing this, we must consider the nature of the surviving textual evidence from this era. Although English monks like the venerable Bede and Welsh chroniclers and poets like Nennius and the aforementioned Aneirin provide us with invaluable insights into the events of their age, their accounting of events is often clouded by the biases of their time, and should be examined through a critical lens. With that covered, let us begin with Yr Hen Ogledd: the old North, a region home to major Brittonic Kingdoms like Elmet, Gododdin, Rheged, and Strathclyde, who by the 6th century, shared an eastern border with the Anglic Kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira. During their natal years, these proto-English Kingdoms appear to have been smaller and weaker than their Briton neighbours, and Bernicia may even have intermittently been a tributary state to the Cumbrian Kings of Gododdin. This, however, would change with the ascension of Æthelfrith, king of Bernicia, who according to Bede was 'a most powerful king, who, more than all the leaders of the English, harried the people of the Britons.' This is seemingly corroborated in Aneirin's old Welsh poem, *Y Gododdin*: an elegy to king Mynyddog Mwynfawr of Gododdin, who around 600 AD lost his Kingdom to the Angles, who were probably aided by the Kingdom of Rheged. Æthelfrith's successor, Edwin, shared his predecessors' expansionist ambitions, and both Bede and Nennius seem to agree that he conquered Elmet, the second of the four major northern Brittonic Kingdoms. However, this ambition would provoke retaliation in the form of Cadwallon ap Cadfan, King of Gwynedd. In response to Edwin's encroachment on his territory, Cadwallon forged an alliance with Penda, a Prince of Mercia, and with his help, led the Britons of the north into open rebellion against Edwin. At the Battle of Hatfield Chase in October of 633,

Cadwallon crushed Edwin's armies, then conquered the entirety of Northern England. Cadwallon's ascendancy would be short-lived, for he would be killed in the Battle of Heavensfield by Oswald, son of Æthelfrith, allowing the Bernician royal line to once more assert dominance in the North of England in the ensuing decade, unite with Deira to form of the Kingdom of Northumbria. The legacy of Cadwallon ap Cadfan of Gwynedd is seemingly divided along ethnic lines. English commentators like Bede portray him as the most tyrannical despot the English ever faced, while Welsh poems portray him as the greatest hero among the Briton warrior-kings. If we, as modern observers, can draw any takeaways from Cadwallon's reign, it is that his cooperation with Penda of Mercia tells us that there was never a binary struggle between Celtic Briton and Anglo-Saxon, but rather a deeply complex political landscape where cooperation often extended beyond religious, ethnic and linguistic lines. Indeed, the frequent cross-pollination of Picts, Gaels, Angles, Saxons, and Britons in the old North often blurred the lines where one culture ended and another began. By 731, most of the Brythonic lands of Yr Hen Ogledd were once more under Northumbrian lordship, save for Strathclyde, which would survive as a distinct political entity into the 11th century. However, textual evidence suggests that in lands ruled by the Northumbrians, the Celtic language of the Northern Britons survived for centuries even after their Kingdoms had been extinguished. Let us now move from the northern end of the medieval Brythonic world to the very south of it. For much of history, the peninsula of Cornwall was distinctly a Celtic land. In the early middle ages, Cornwall, alongside Devon, were part of the Kingdom of Dumnonia. In times past, Dumnonia had been joined by land to its sister-Kingdoms in Wales proper, but this connection was severed after the Battle of Deorham in 577, wherein Worcester and Gloucester became part of the Saxon Kingdom of Hwicce, later a Mercian client-state. Whereas the histories of the northern Celtic Britons were defined primarily by their relationship to the Northern Angles, their southern cousins were defined by their relationship with the West Saxons, and as a general trend, the 8th century saw the Dumnonii gradually pushed westwards by the Kingdom of Wessex. The exact nature of these conflicts is obscured by a lack of detailed surviving sources. For example, the *Annales Cambriae*, a medieval Latin anthology of Welsh history, notes that in 722, the southern Britons won a victory at the Battle of Hehil, located somewhere in Devon. The Annales do not specify who this victory was won against, but most historians agree it was likely against Wessex, thereby allowing the Britons to successfully stymie West Saxon expansion for a time. This, however, would be temporary, and by the reign of Alfred the Great, Devon had long since been absorbed into the Kingdom of Wessex, and the Cornish peninsula, while maintaining some form of Brittonic autonomy, would be under the political domination of the West Saxon Kings. With that said, although Cornwall would eventually become an integral part of the Kingdom of England, the Brythonic language spoken there survived for nearly a millennia afterwards. Let us now shift our focus to central Britain, where Kingdoms like Gwent, Dyfed, Powys, and the aforementioned Gwynedd thrived. Throughout the 7th century, these Brittonic polities bordered the Mercians, who for the most part, they enjoyed amiable relations with. As it was in the old north, the ethnic boundaries between these lands were blurred, with plenty of cultural cross-pollination and intermarriage occurring across ethnic lines. Moreover, both Briton and Mercian Kings had a common enemy, the Angles of Northumbria. We have already covered how Cadwallon of Gwynedd and Prince Penda of Mercia teamed up to defeat Edwin of Deira. However, this would not be the last time that Britons and Mercians fought side by side. In 642, Penda, now King of the Mercians, would once more meet the Northern Angles in battle alongside an alliance

of Briton warriors from Powys and Gwynedd, the latter of whom had been sent by King Cadwaladr, son of the infamous Cadwallon. With Welsh aid, Penda was able to slay the Bernician King, Oswald, in battle. Penda's victories over the Northumbrians made him the most powerful Anglo-Saxon ruler in Britain, laying the foundations for an era of Mercian supremacy. Thus, the Early Medieval Welsh Kingdoms not only were masters of their own destiny, but, through their role in elevating Penda, crucial power players in the politics of their Anglo-Saxon neighbours as well. Over time, the relationship the Britons enjoyed with Mercia began to sour. The catalyst for this occurred in 685, when the Picts crushed the army of the Northumbrian King Ecgfrith at the battle of Dun Nechtain. This defeat was the capstone in the collapse of Northumbria's expansionist ambitions. In its place, Mercia became the most imperialistic Kingdom in Britain, expanding its dominance throughout the midlands and the south of England throughout the 700s AD, and looking to Wales for further territorial gains. In the modern parish of Llantysilio-yn-Iâl is a stone column known as the pillar of Eliseg. Erected during the reign of King Cyngen ap Cadell of Powys [808-854 AD], the stone is inscribed in Latin with the deeds of that King's ancestors. Among these, are the victories of Cyngen's great grandfather, Elise ap Gwylog, who "seized the inheritance of Powys from the power of the English by force." Through this, we can deduce that around the mid-700s, Powys had come under Mercian domination, but Elise ap Gwylog launched a successful rebellion to reclaim his realm. This may have occurred in 757, when the murder of King Æthelbald threw Mercia into a succession crisis. After this succession crisis, King Offa would ascend to the throne of Mercia, and rule from late 757 to 796. The Annales Cambriae records that Offa frequently campaigned against the Britons on his western frontier, with his most likely enemy being the resurgent kingdom of Powys, if we take the inscriptions on the Pillar of Eliseg into account. Evidently, the Welsh became troublesome enough that, late in his reign, Offa sponsored the creation of a massive earthen ditch-and-wall to be dug out along the frontier lands between his domain and the Kingdom of Powys. This 132-kilometer-long fortification, known titularly as Offa's Dyke, indents the landscape to this day, although historians still debate its true nature and purpose. Ostensibly, a giant border ditch seems like an antagonistic act. However, at certain points, the path of the dyke veers eastwards to leave key fortresses and fertile valleys in Welsh hands, indicating that the dyke was a mutually agreed upon boundary rather than an act of Mercian territorial aggression. Moreover, while the previously blurred ethnic boundaries between Briton and Anglo-Saxon became more strictly defined after the erection of Offa's Dyke, some, but not all historians assert that cross-border movement, for trade and other purposes, continued in a more tightly controlled manner even after the Dyke's construction. The erection of Offa's Dyke did not affect the Mercian desire to establish a zone of hegemony over the Welsh Kingdoms, as they had with other periphery zones like Kent and Wessex. According to the Annales Cambriae, Offa's successor, King Coenwulf, waged war on Dyfed and Gwynedd in 798, during which the latter's king, Caradog ap Meirion, perished in battle. However, the gains Coenwulf achieved through these victories did not seem to be major, or particularly permanent. Ultimately, surviving historical evidence from this era is scant, but the existence of Offa's dyke and the inscriptions on the Pillar of Eliseg come together to form a basic historical narrative where, throughout the 700s and 800s AD, Mercia would intermittently use political or military force to establish supremacy over various Welsh border Kingdoms, but the Welsh would usually manage to reassert their sovereignty, and re-establish civil political relations with their Anglo-Saxon neighbours. In 865 AD, the balance of power in Britain was severely disrupted as a new player entered

the game, in the form of a great heathen army, and it is here that we will end the first episode of our history of the Welsh. The story of the Vikings in Britain has been told exhaustively from the perspective of the Anglo-Saxons and the Norsemen, but in our next episode, we will tell that era of history from the perspective of the Celtic Britons, as dynamic rulers like Rhodri the Great and Hywel Dda unite the Welsh Kingdoms, fend off the incursions of the Danes and usher in an age of learning and prosperity while Strathclyde, the last Briton Kingdom of the old North, experiences its twilight years.

8 Wales during the Viking Age - Medieval Celts DOCUMENTARY

In our last episode on the history of the medieval Welsh, we took a tour of the Cumbrian Kingdoms of 6th to 8th century Britain and explored the complex relationships they held with their Anglo-Saxon neighbours. In this episode, new warlords from the rugged north will arrive on British shores for land and plunder, and throughout the 9th and 10th centuries, the heirs of Arthur will continue the fight to preserve the independence of their ancient Kingdoms against not only the English, but the Great Heathen Army as well. At the turn of the 8th century, the geopolitical status quo of Britain would undergo a dramatic shift. In the year 793 AD, Lindisfarne, the holiest monastery of the Kingdom of Northumbria, was brutally sacked by people history remembers as ‘Vikings’. Throughout the next few decades, waves of Danish and Norse raiders and settlers would continue to arrive on Anglo-Saxon shores. This eventually culminated in the invasion of a great heathen army in 865 AD, in which three out of the four of the great Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia, were overrun by Danes, with the Kingdom of Wessex and its royal scion, Alfred, being the lone holdout. While the lands of the Anglo-Saxons were consumed by the ingress of pagan Norsemen, the land of the Britons would see an inverse trend of stabilization, as a new dynasty, the Merfynion of Gwynedd, came to power. Before we delve further into the march of history, we should talk about the sources available to us from this era. Manuscripts like the Harleian genealogy, the Brut y Tywysogion, and the Annales Cambriae offer us valuable insight into the succession of Welsh Kings and the events of the Viking age from the Welsh perspective. However, it should be noted that while primary sources like these give us an invaluable window into the world of Viking age Wales, they are, like all medieval documents, full of anachronisms, internal contradictions, and heavy biases. As such, what follows is merely our best interpretation of an era still shrouded in mystery and uncertainty. In 825, Merfyn Frych, a native of the Isle of Man, seized the throne of the Kingdom of Gwynedd, where his descendants would rule until their domain was annexed into the Kingdom of England in the year 1283. It is not known how exactly Merfyn Frych came to become ruler of Gwynedd. Being from the Isle of Man, it is possible he was dislodged from there by Norse Raiders and forced to take refuge across the water in Gwynedd. Indeed, Viking longboats were active in the Irish sea at the dawn of the 800s AD, where they raided, traded, and established settlements along the Hebrides Islands and the Irish coast. From 816, Gwynedd had been plunged into turmoil, as two brothers, Hywel ap Rhodri Molwynog and Cynan Dindaethwy ap Rhodri, fought a bloody civil war for the throne, all while the bellicose King Coenwulf of Mercia’s armies ravaged throughout all of the Welsh Kingdoms. By 825, both brothers had died, and a Wessex victory over Mercia at the battle of Ellendun triggered the end of the Mercian presence in Wales, at least for now. These elements combined to create a power vacuum in Gwynedd, which Merfyn Frych promptly filled. We know almost nothing about Merfyn’s reign as King of Gwynedd, only that he ruled until the year 844, when he died in battle against an unidentified foe. He would be succeeded by his son: known as Rhodri Mawr: Rhodri the Great. Rhodri Mawr inherited the throne of Gwynedd at a good time, for the Kingdom’s traditional Mercian enemies were too busy fighting either their Saxon kinsmen in Wessex or the increasingly troublesome Viking raiders to partake in their favourite past-time of trying to subjugate the Welsh. Taking advantage of this peace, Rhodri set his eyes upon

expansion. In 855 AD, King Cyngen ap Cadell of Powys died in exile in faraway Rome, ostensibly leaving no heirs. Pressing a dynastic claim to Powys' vacant throne through his mother, Nest ferch Cadell, sister of the late King Cyngen, Rhodri annexed Powys into his realm. As Rhodri expanded his influence over the Welsh peoples, he found out that Wales was not exempt from the Viking raids which plagued the rest of the British isles. However, the son of Merfyn was dynamic and capable in his military leadership, and was able to repulse the Northmen invasions, slaying a Viking warlord named Ormr in 856. Rhodri's expansions throughout the Welsh lands continued in the following decades, when in 872, Gwgon, the last in the traditional line of kings of Seisyllwg, drowned, leaving no heir. In prior years, Rhodri had secured a marriage to Gwgon's sister, Angharad. Thus, after the King of Seisyllwg's death, Rhodri's second son, Cadell ap Rhodri would become ruler of that Kingdom by virtue of his mother's blood, and become a vassal to his father. Dynastic politics in medieval Wales was as sophisticated and complex as anywhere else in Europe, and establishing a proper pedigree among the ancient families of the Celtic Britons was essential to success, something Rhodri Mawr understood well, and exploited to his benefit. This latest territorial expansion once more coincided with yet another wave of Viking aggression, and in the same year Rhodri vassalized Seisyllwg, he won two further battles against an invading Danish horde on the isle of Anglesey. However, in 877, the Vikings returned with a large army, evidently overrunning Gwynedd and forcing Rhodri to flee to Ireland. Later that year, the Great Heathen Army also overran Wessex, forcing King Alfred to go into hiding in the marshes of Somerset. However, in one of history's more unlikely comebacks, Alfred managed to rally the West Saxon fynds and decisively crush the Northmen at the Battle of Edington in the summer of 878. With the majority of Vikings in Britain focused on the Wessex campaign, Rhodri was able to return from exile and reestablish control over his domain. Unfortunately for him, a decreased Viking presence in central Britain also meant that King Ceolwulf, client ruler of a Mercian rump state under Danish overlordship, was given an opportunity to try and re-establish his predecessors' hegemony over the Wealas across Offa's Dyke. It is here that Rhodri ap Merfyn the Great met his end, perishing in the battle against the Mercians. Upon his demise, the first great Merfynion's realm was divided among his four sons, although only two would end up being politically relevant: Anarawd ap Rhodri, assuming the Kingship of Gwynedd, and the aforementioned Cadell, King of Seisyllwg. In 881, these brothers, led by Anarawd, once more threw off the hegemony of Mercia, which was itself now under Wessex's overlordship. At the river Conwy, the sons of Rhodri crushed the Mercian Lord Aethelred's armies in a victory that Welsh annals vindictively describe as divinely ordained revenge for the death of their father. Shortly after his victory, Anarawd forged an alliance with the Vikings of Jorvik, presumably as extra insurance against future Mercian aggressions, then turned his focus onto continuing his late father's vision of uniting Wales. However, many other Welsh Kingdoms didn't appreciate the sight of the Anarawd ravenously eyeing their lands. To that end, southern Welsh Kingdoms like Dyfed and Brycheiniog, who had never been under Rhodri's overlordship, gravitated to the court of the rising star that was Alfred of Wessex, accepting West Saxon suzerainty in order to protect themselves from Gwynedd. Ironically, King Anarawd would later abandon his alliance with Jorvik and also became a client to Alfred, thereby putting all of Wales' most influential native rulers within the gravitational orbit of the House of Wessex. Overall, all of this politicking serves to re-illustrate a point from our first episode: that Welsh history was never a binary ethnic struggle between Briton, Saxon, and now also Dane, but a complex web of relationships in which various Welsh rulers were

capable of working both within or beyond cultural lines to preserve the independence and agency of their realms. While the Merfynion of Gwynedd busied themselves with uniting the Britons of Wales proper, further north, their wayward kinsmen in the Kingdom of Alt Clut thrived. Sharing extremely close cultural ties to their sister-peoples in Wales proper, Alt Clut was the last independent remnant of Yr Hen Ogledd, the Welsh of the Old North. It was a small but prosperous maritime Kingdom, named for the titular coastal fortress town of Alt Clut, known in English as Dumbarton Rock. This fortress, which served as the seat of the Northern Welsh Kings, was nigh impregnable, with an alliance of Northumbrians and Picts having failed to take it back in 756. However, during the reign of King Arthgal ap Dyfnwal, Alt Clut would face a new foe. In the year 870 AD, the mighty Norse warlord Ivar the Boneless, having conquered the Northumbrian capital of York and ravaged the lands of the Picts in previous years, set his sights on the fortress of Alt Clut. Ivar was joined by his brother Olaf, King of Dublin, and together they brought their might to bear upon Dumbarton Rock. King Arthgal resisted valiantly, holding out for an unprecedented four months, one of the longest sieges of the era. However, the Vikings eventually cracked the nut, and Alt Clut fell, its people massacred or sold into slavery. The fall of Dumbarton Rock was not the end of the independence of the northern Britons, for the Kingdom survived, moving its center of power inland along the Clyde river, near modern day Glasgow. Deprived of its titular fortress, it rebranded itself as the Kingdom of Strathclyde. Ironically, the presence of the Vikings in northern Britain, which had initially been a fiery plague upon the northern Welsh, soon turned into one of their greatest political assets. From 875 onwards, the Kings of Strathclyde appear to have established long-term friendly relationships with the Norse rulers of Dublin and Jorvik. Because of this, Strathclyde was able to expand its borders greatly, having reached as far south as Penrith by 927 AD. Much of this expansion was at the expense of the greatly weakened and Viking-overrun Kingdom of Northumbria. In that sense, the Strathclyde Britons were taking advantage of the Danish invasions of Anglo-Saxon territory to reconquer land taken from the Celtic Kings of Yr Hen Ogledd centuries ago. Let us now shift the focus of our story back onto the Merfynion, for as Strathclyde thrived in the north, in the southwest of Wales proper, a grandson of Rhodri was poised to surpass his grandfather's legacy. Hywel ap Cadell, known to history as Hywel Dda, or Hywel the Good, was the son of Cadell ap Rhodri, the King of Seisyllwg. Towards the end of his life around 904 AD, Cadell conquered the neighbouring statelet of Dyfed, installing his son Hywel as King there. In 920, after assuming sole possession of the throne, Hywel united the realms of Dyfed and Seisyllwg into one Kingdom, Deheubarth. In 928, Hywel went on a pilgrimage to Rome. He was not the first Welsh King to undergo this journey, but he was the first one to return home alive. Around this time, the Merfynion monarch also devoted himself to what would become the keystone of his legacy: the Cyfraith Hywel, or "Laws of Hywel." Before Hywel's reign, Welsh law was a jumble of regional customs passed down orally through the poems of Bards. Attempting a Justinian-esque standardization of this eclectic mess of ancient Celtic traditions was a monumental feat, yet it was accomplished nonetheless. Beyond this, Hywel is also the only Welsh King known to have minted his own coins. From a geopolitical point of view, the reign of Hywel Dda marked a turning point for the Welsh, for it was during the King of Deheubarth's lifetime that the Celtic Britons would, for the first time in history, have to contend with a united Kingdom of the English. After the triumph of King Alfred over the Great Heathen Army, his descendants in the House of Wessex had continued what he had started. Throughout the 910s, Alfred's son, Edward the Elder, and his daughter, Æthelflæd the Lady of Mercia, succeeded in

pushing the Danes out of Viking Mercia and East Anglia. Upon Edward's death in 924, he was succeeded by his son, Æthelstan, who achieved overlordship over the Vikings of Jorvik in 927, thereby bringing Northumbria back under Anglo-Saxon rule. With the four great Anglo-Saxon domains of Wessex now united, a new Kingdom was formed, which for the rest of history, would be the dominant titan of the British Isles. For the entirety of his reign, Hywel Dda willingly accepted a junior, tributary relationship with the English crown. In 926, he supplicated himself before King Athelstan, and thereafter was known to be a fairly regular guest at the court of Wessex. Playing the sycophant to the English may have been a dent on Hywel's Cumbric pride, but it is clear that the good King was a realist, recognizing who the powerhouse in Britain was now, and that there was more to gain by being England's friend than England's enemy. Not everyone was happy with Hywel's appeasement of the English, which we can see in the Welsh literature of the age. The *Armes Prydein*, or 'prophecy of Britain', is a famous piece of heroic poetry that claimed to foresee a future in which all the non-English peoples of Britain, including the Scots, the Irish, the Norsemen, and the Britons of Cornwall, Wales and Strathclyde would come together in a coalition and push the Anglo-Saxons back into the sea. The *Armes Prydein* was no doubt written during Hywel Dda's reign, and was an explicit criticism of the Welsh King's policy of peaceful pragmatism with the English. Hywel would never buy into such romantic visions of past Celtic glory. Infact, in 934 AD, he, alongside other Welsh Kings, had even joined Athelstan in a campaign to help the English subdue the Scots and their Brittonic kinsmen in Strathclyde. Hywel's pro-English policies bore him fruit in 942, when Idwal ap Anarawd, King of Gwynedd and Hywel's cousin, grew fed up with being under the English thumb, started a rebellion, and launched an attack on the English. Predictably, Idwal was killed in action. He left behind two sons, Iago and Ieuaf, but before either could inherit the throne, Hywel swept in, forcing them into exile, and seizing the northern Kingdom for himself. This made Hywel Dda the King of all Wales except Gwent and Morgannwg, something which the newly crowned king Edmund of England did not challenge, likely due to Hywel's long-standing friendliness to the English throne. In 950, Hywel the Good passed away, and upon his death, his united realm collapsed into dynastic warfare. In the north, the sons of Idwal returned from exile and reclaimed Gwynedd, waging war on Hywel's sons, Owain, Rhodri, and Edwin, who retained power in Deheubarth. Let us now turn our attention northwards once more. Back in 937, King Owain ap Dyfnwal of Strathclyde, responding to the imperialist aggressions of King Athelstan in the north of England, entered into an alliance with King Olaf Guthfrithson, the Viking King of Dublin, and Constantine II, King of Alba, an early form of Scotland. This was the closest thing to the anti-Saxon coalition dreamed up in the *Armes Prydain*. However, rather than sweeping the English back into the sea, this alliance of Norsemen and Celts was crushed at the battle of Brunanburh. The disaster at Brunanburh did not spell the immediate end of Strathclyde, but it did mean that, for the next century, the northern Britons would find themselves increasingly hemmed in between two growing powers, the Scots of Alba, and the English. Over the next few decades, Strathclyde came increasingly under the sway of the Gaelic Kings of Scotland, and, sometime between 1018 to 1054, the last remnant of Yr Hen Ogledd had been annexed into the Scottish crown or the English lords of Northumbria. After the fall of Strathclyde, where Brythonic chieftains had once ruled throughout all of Britain, now only among the squabbling petty kingdoms of Wales proper did the Cymric peoples retain their independence. In the following centuries, even those domains would come under threat, as in 1066, a bastard from Normandy defeated the Saxon King Harold

Godwinson in a place called Hastings, and the course of British history was once again forever altered.

9 Full History of the Ancient Celts: Origins to Roman Conquest DOCUMENTARY

When the Gaulish peoples are mentioned, we think of naked warriors, mysterious druids, and a defeated warlord, knelt before the Roman Eagle. From their prehistoric origins to their final doomed struggle against Rome, the ancient Celts developed a reputation as proud warriors capable of savagery and bravery in equal measure. In this special documentary on the Gallic peoples, we will tell the sweeping story of the rise and fall of the robust iron age culture which once dominated nearly all of continental Europe. We are reliant almost solely on limited archaeological and etymological evidence to piece together their culture, while in the centuries leading up to the birth of Christ, a scattering of Greek and Romans writings give us a slightly more dynamic window into their society. Neither offers a complete survey of the Celtic world, but they provide us with a workable set of information that, in lieu of anything else, we have no choice but to rely on. The most popular narrative of the Celtic genesis can be found in the town of Hallstatt, which sits nestled against a lake between the idyllic peaks of the Alps. It was here, between the years of 1846 and 1863, that an Austrian mine operator known as Johann Georg Ramsauer excavated the derelict cemetery of an ancient salt-mining community. The material culture discovered here was named the Hallstatt Culture, after the town, it was discovered in, and is widely considered to be the birthplace of early Celtic society. The Hallstatt culture has since been broken up into four chronological phases, based on the evolution of artifacts found in its sites. Hallstatt-A and B emerged in the late Bronze age between 1200-800BC in Central Europe. It was initially a minor deviation of the Indo-European Urnfield Complex, an older material culture prominent across much of central Europe. Hallstatt society was based on mining salt, copper, and tin, and trading them to outlying regions. These were crucial products, for salt was used to preserve meat in winters, while copper and tin were used to forge Bronze, the most precious metal of the era. The peoples of the Hallstatt heartland grew prosperous from this trade, which remained a core part of their economy for centuries to come. Around 800 BC, ironworking was introduced to the Hallstatt through trade with the Hittites and Greeks. This started the Hallstatt-C era, where the proto-Celts came into their own as a culture distinct from the Urnfield complex. They built hillforts throughout central Europe, populating them with artisans and warriors, led by petty Chieftains. It was at this point in the early iron age that they started developing a class system and social inequality, becoming more hierarchical. Graves excavated from the Hallstatt A and B eras were uniformly simple and egalitarian in nature, however, burials from Hallstatt C onwards show a great disparity in wealth and status. Clustered around their hillforts were great barrow mounds, the resting place of wealthy tribal elites. Here, nobles were buried alongside their treasures such as collars, brooches, axeheads, and other metalworks of bronze, iron and gold. These valuables oft featured iconic geometric designs and animalistic motifs. The presence of ivory and amber in these barrows suggests that they maintained trade networks that extended as far out as the Baltics and North Africa. Equestrianism was likely a symbol of power and nobility during this era, evidenced by the presence of a distinct style of slender slashing sword present in many graves, best suited for cavalry warfare. Additionally, the highest tribal elites were buried alongside ceremonial bridles, tackles, and ornate horse-drawn cult wagons. The importance of the horse in aristocratic society was likely due to contact with the Indo-Iranian Cimmerians, from whom they adapted the horse and wagon as symbols

of tribal power. It was perhaps through the mobility of the horse, and their economic and cultural soft power, that the Hallstatt peoples expanded out of their traditional heartland, and exported their cultural influence across much of central Europe. The transition from Hallstatt C to D occurred around 600 BC, and was marked by the culture shifting west along the Danube, Rhine, and Seine rivers, gravitating towards the Greek Colony of Massalia, modern Marseille. The Phoenician Greeks of Massalia were the early Celts' gateway to the riches of the Mediterranean world. Through them, they imported all sorts of southern luxuries, including fine pottery, glass, and the most precious luxury of all, wine. Late Hallstatt peoples soon began trading with other Mediterranean peoples, including the Phoenicians and the Etruscans, whose advanced civilization we've covered in a previous episode. The first historical mention of the Celts came in 517 BC from the Greek historian Hecataeus of Miletus, who referred to the people living beyond Massalia as Keltoi. This word was possibly borrowed from a tribal endonym, or was Greek for "the tall ones", contributing to the enduring stereotype that the average Celt stood a head taller than their Greco-Roman counterpart. Either way, it is a term that we still use today. Late Hallstatt chieftains consolidated a great amount of power by virtue of the foreign wealth they controlled. The many small hill forts that dotted the landscape were largely replaced by fewer but larger population centers, such as the ruins of an impressive tribal complex at Hueneberg in southern Germany. Meanwhile, the barrow mounds became more splendid than ever before, inlaid with luxury imports from Greece and Etruria. By around 500 BC the Hallstatt culture had reached its peak in wealth, territory, and influence. But how can we be sure that the Hallstatt material complex represents the early development of a distinct Celtic culture? First of all the swords found in late Hallstatt graves closely resemble the weaponry that Greco-Roman writers described the Celts using in later centuries. Secondly, the importance of the symbolic horse and wagon in burials was considered an early form of later Celtic funeral rites, which saw Chieftains buried within two-wheeled war chariots. The geometric and animalistic art style of the late Hallstatt era is accepted to be an early form of Celtic artwork, and perhaps most importantly, the name Hallstatt itself is derived from an old Celtic word meaning "Salt Place". This is reinforced by the fact that in the Celtic languages of Welsh, Cornish, and Breton, the words for "Salt" are Halwyn, Haloin and Hollein; presumably cognates of the same ancient root as the ancient word from which the name of the modern town of Hallstatt is derived. The evidence all seems to suggest that the Hallstatt heartland was where the Celts emerged as a visible people group, featuring an early form of the Celtic language, tribal hierarchy, and artistic expression. However, this theory has its problems: although by the late Hallstatt period, artifacts belonging to the culture could be found from Britain to Croatia, it did not mean that all the peoples in those lands were early Celts. Additionally, not all Celtic speakers in the early Iron Age would have belonged to the Hallstatt culture. The early Celtic language that became associated with the Hallstatt Heartland developed out of an older Indo-European tongue around 1500BC, and over centuries spread across much of central and western Europe. People on the periphery of the early Celtic world adopted the Proto-Celtic tongue due to the cultural and economic influence of the Hallstatt elites, but did not necessarily adopt the material culture. For example, Ireland and parts of Spain were predominantly Celtic-Speaking by the 5th century BC, but the Celtic migrants there had mixed with the indigenous populations of those regions to form the Celtiberian and Gaelic cultures, which had little to no cultural continuity with the Hallstatt complex. Basically, there were those who followed the Hallstatt culture who were not Celtic speaking, and Celtic speaking peoples who

were not of the Hallstatt culture. The prosperous world of the Hallstatt Chieftains came to a sudden end around 450 BC, when the increasingly imperialistic Massalian Greeks decided to abandon their old trade connections to instead try and subjugate the Celts, while the Etruscans shifted their trade routes away from the Hallstatt heartland. As a result, Celtic power shifted to the north, evolving into Hallstatt's dynamic successor, the La Tene. The La Tene culture lasted from around 450 to 50 BC, and is the most iconic era of ancient Celtic history. Developing in four separate tribal centers, principally along the Moselle and Marne rivers, it soon expanded across much of Europe. By 300 BC, the La Tene culture was dominant across Central Europe, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Switzerland, and later would arrive in Britain, western Spain, and Ireland. La Tene artwork was what the conventional mind considers quintessentially Celtic, featuring cauldrons, drinking vessels, weapons, shields, armour, and jewellery characterized by stylistic spiral patterns. It is here we slowly transition from relying primarily on archaeological finds, and into the written attestations of Classical Greek and Roman authors, who while often biased or misinformed, still give us a workable amount of information in piecing together the Celtic world, its language, politics, society, and religion. The general public may be familiar with the word "Gaul", a term often used to refer to the Celts of the La Tene world. This title comes from the old Germanic "walhaz", meaning "foreigner", which the Celts certainly would have been in the eyes of the ancient Germanic tribes. Meanwhile, when the young Roman Republic, encountered the La Tene Celts across the Alps in Northern Italy, they referred to them as "Galli", which might have been the name of an individual tribe they applied to the entire ethnocultural group. We will use the words "Gaul", "Gallic" and "Celtic" interchangeably, but generally this was not how the peoples in question referred to themselves. Indeed, a common misconception is that there was ever a linguistically or culturally uniform nation of Gallic people. By the La Tene period, the Celtic languages had diverged drastically from one another. The main split were the P-Celtic languages, spoken across North-Central Continental Europe and modern Britain, and Q-Celtic, the more lexically conservative tongues spoken by the Gaels of Ireland and probably the Celtiberians of Spain. This split can still be observed today in the modern Welsh and Irish languages, which are mutually unintelligible due to belonging to the P and Q subgroups respectively. It is unlikely that the speakers of their ancient counterparts would see any common ground between themselves. Gaels and Celtiberians aside, the Gauls of the continent and Britons of the isle to their north were perpetually a politically divided people. The main form of social organization in the Celtic world was the tribe, ruled by a hereditary Chief and his warrior aristocracy. A chief's lands were further subdivided into administrative districts called pagi, governed by lesser houses loyal to the chieftaincy in a system similar to Feudalism. Mainly through Roman records, we know that some notable tribes that existed in the late iron age include the Helvetii, Senones, Veneti, and Tectosages. Some names live on even today, such as the Belgae, who gave their name to modern Belgium, or the Parisii, for whom the city of Paris is named. Still, the Gaulish peoples likely acknowledged elements of a common culture that was shared beyond tribal lines. One constant was the social hierarchy. At the top of the pyramid was the Chieftain, who like his Hallstatt ancestors ruled rural communities from a Hillfort, which were constructed with timber-lace and stone ramparts the Romans called Murus Gallicus. Under the chief was an elite aristocracy of warrior-nobles. Next were craftsmen, mostly consisting of skilled metallurgists who lived in and around the Chief's hillfort, supplying the warriors with arms and armour. 90% of Gallic society were subsistence farmers, providing a portion of their production to their Chief, who used it

to maintain his warrior aristocracy, which in turn protected the farmers from external enemies in a mutualistic relationship. Wheat, barley, beans, oats, and peas made up the Gallic diet, while sheep, pigs and cattle were commonly raised for wool, meat, and milk. In the south of France, the Celts cultivated grapes and olives. Rather than being a primitive naturalistic people as common perception implies, the Gauls were actually highly developed, with ploughs, iron shares and coulters able to efficiently till even the heaviest soils. Most Gauls lived in small rural communities in rectangular houses of timber, wattle, daub, and clay, well insulated for cold winters. In Britain, Ireland, and Northwestern Spain, homes were mainly circular and built on unmortared stone. Architecture differed little between the social classes, though the feasting hall of a warrior aristocrat would be larger than a peasant's sheep farm. Greek and Roman writings and sculptures have given us a romanticized image of the average Gaul as a towering, red-maned noble savage sporting a manly mustache, while painted head to toe in terrifying war paint. In reality, the average Gaulish man would not have been much taller than the average Roman or Greek. While fashion differed from region to region, the Gauls tended to dress conservatively. Men generally wore long-sleeved tunics and baggy trousers woven from flax and wool. Women tended to wear long dresses, while both sexes were often draped in cloaks decorated with colourful plaid patterns rendered from natural dyes of copper, berries, plants, and stale urine. Personal grooming was highly important to the Celts. For example, both sexes were said to meticulously and painfully pluck all their body hairs. Additionally, there is some truth to the stereotype of the thick Gallic mustache, depicted often in both Celtic and Greco-Roman iconography, it was likely believed to be a sign of manhood & virility. Gallic warriors were also said to have washed their hair in a mixture of slaked lime and water which stiffened it into white spikes. Tattoos and skin dyes were not practiced by continental Gauls, and were limited mainly to the ancient Britons, who according to Roman accounts, rendered a bluish dye from the *isatis tinctoria* flower, called woad, which when applied to their flesh was said to provide magic protection in battle. Often of cultural or spiritual significance, jewellery was common among the upper classes. The brooch, a fastener for a cloak, was a remarkably enduring characteristic of celtic fashion for centuries. Bracelets and arm rings were common, fashioned in the ornate swirling style characteristic of La Tene art. The Torc, a weight metal neck-ring, was a symbol of status and rank, said to bestow the protection of the Gods to whoever wore it. On that note, we should take a moment to explore the religion of the Ancient Celts. There are two major misconceptions of Ancient Celtic Polytheism, one perpetuated by modern neo-Pagan groups, who often portray the ancient Celtic faith as a pure, idealized form of proto-environmentalist nature worship, and one perpetuated by the Ancient Romans, who sought to portray the Celts as backwards barbarians. The Gaulish Gods did not belong to an ordered pantheon, and religion across the Celtic world was not uniform. Today we know of over 400 Gallic deities, most being the holy patron of a single tribe, or a local god associated with a certain area, like Sequana, who was worshipped only at the mouth of the River Seine. However, there were a handful of Gods who were prominent across the Celtic world. These would include the thunder-wielding Taranis, Maponos the God of Youth, Belenus the Sun God, Cernunnos the Horned One, Epona the Horse goddess, and Toutatis, the war-like Tribal protector. One of their most popular Gods was Lugh, patron of business, trade and technology, dismantling the misconception that Celtic polytheism was purely naturalistic. Celtic religious rites were rigidly structured, and not unlike the Olympian religion when it came to sacrifice and divination. It was facilitated by a class of professional priests - The Druids. Today, the Druids conjure

up a popular image of mysterious, long-bearded elders in white robes. However, they actually wielded massive political influence, often serving as peace-makers and diplomats on behalf of their chieftains, mediating legal matters, serving as healers, and heading education in their tribe. Training in order to become a druid involved an intense 20-year regimen, in which a dedicant had to memorize a massive array of oral histories, lore, medicinal knowledge, astronomy, religious rituals, and divination practices. Meanwhile, magic potions that bestow superhuman strength on their drinkers are regrettably absent from Druidic historiography. The Druids likely belonged to a common order that existed beyond tribal lines. They hosted a pan-Gaulish meeting each year among the Forests of the Carnutes, sacred ground where major political or religious issues were settled between tribes, making them a key vehicle in maintaining a common identity among the many tribes. One of the key duties of a Druid was to officiate sacrifices to the Gods. Human sacrifice is often described as a core part of the Celtic ritual. According to the Roman author Lucan, different Gods called for different forms of ritual slaughter. Toutatis' victims were drowned in a vat of water, while Taranis' called for men to be beheaded, or burned alive in giant effigies of straw. According to the Greek historian Diodorus, human victims were also sacrificed for the purposes of divination. The Druids never wrote anything down, keeping their knowledge a secret restricted to members of their order. We will never have their own accounts of their religious rites, while the Roman authors who wrote about these practices had a vested interest in making their Celtic enemies look savage and barbarous. We can't deny the existence of human sacrifice, but we should also keep in mind the limited perspective that modern scholars have been offered on the subject. Between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC, La Tene Celtic culture had assimilated its way across a staggering amount of Europe. This is exemplified by modern day countries as far apart as Portugal and Ukraine, which both have provinces named 'Galicia' - land of the Gauls. Warfare played a huge role in this continental spread, which begs the question, what made the Celts such effective fighters? The stereotypical image of the Gallic warrior perpetuated by Greco-Roman writers is that of a savage, ferocious in spirit, but primitive in equipment and strategy. However, the full story is much more complex. For one thing, Gaulish arms and armour were highly advanced for their time. The Celts were master ironworkers who were able to arm their warriors with longswords, and spears with specialized tips for either thrusting or throwing, making the average Gaul deadly in melee and ranged combat. For protection, the Gallic fighters bore a long oakwood shield, with a hard iron boss for blunt-force bashing. Most warriors wore agen and port type helmets, featuring a brimmed iron dome, and a pair of wing-like cheekguards. There is also evidence that the Gauls were the inventors of chainmail, based on surviving pictorial evidence of a type of metal cuirass, made of tightly linked iron rings, the earliest historical example of such technology. The Romans were so impressed by Gallic metallurgy, that the Legionary's helmet, his Lorica Hamata armour, and even his Gladius and Spatha swords, were all adapted from Celtic or Celtiberian designs. So, Roman armour as we know it today actually owes its iconic form in huge part to the innovations of the Celts. However, among the Celts themselves, body armour was rare, mainly reserved for select high-ranking nobles, while most warriors went into battle wearing just shirts, trousers, or in some cases, nothing at all. The naked warrior is one of the most enduring legends of Celtic history. Historical evidence suggests a significant amount of Celts did fight nude, either for religious purposes or to inspire fear in their enemies. Surviving depictions of bare skinned Celtic combatants in both artwork and historical record suggest that while the majority of Gauls did not fight naked, the practice was fairly normalized. The use

of the iconic war-chariot also bares mentioning, as they were used both as versatile mobile missile units, and also as basic transport vehicles, quickly ferrying warriors from one theatre of battle to another. For all their arms and armour, the principal advantage of the Gallic army was their ability to utterly terrify their foe. Both Roman and Greek records report on the petrifying nature of the Celts, claiming that before any engagement, they would roar and brag, performing ritualistic war-dances while bellowing a deafening sound out of their boar-headed war trumpets. Put yourself in the shoes of a superstitious plebeian fresh off an ancient olive farm or slums of Rome, and you can appreciate the supernatural terror that a mob of screaming, dancing, horn-blaring muscle-men must have had. In terms of battle tactics, the Celts kept things fairly simple. Skilled javelin throwers would soften up enemy formation, while chariot and cavalry riders would be used to flank and harass. For the most part, a Gallic victory banked entirely on a disorganized blood-drunk charge, the impact of which was usually enough to rout the enemy formation, making it easy to slaughter them piecemeal. Ancient Celtic warfare may have lacked the discipline of a Legion or Phalanx, but it wasn't primitive or basic. To the Gauls, war was a way of life, and their dynamic formula of inspiring terror in their enemies and fearlessness among themselves was what saw their armies come to dominate not just the majority of continental Europe, but also take them right up to the doorstep of a young Roman Republic. From about 450BC, Gallic Northern and Central Europe became overpopulated, and many enterprising Celtic war leaders led their retinues southwards to Italy, which the Celts knew to be a bountiful land of olives, figs, and wine. According to the Livy, they first entered the peninsula as early as 600BC, when a multi-tribal band of immigrants led by the King Bellovesus of the Bituriges crossed the Alps, and made war on the northern cities of the Etruscans, a culturally sophisticated, but politically independent network of city-states whose heartland was in modern day Tuscany. Upon driving the Etruscans out of the Po Valley, the Gauls founded the settlement of Mediolanum, the modern city Milan. Other waves of migration followed, and by 400BC, various Gallic tribes had established themselves as the masters of a chunk of Northern Italy that stretched from the Alps to the Adriatic Coast. Indigenous Ligures to the west and Veneti to the east eventually became culturally assimilated by their Celtic neighbours. The Gauls were on the rise, but they were not the only growing power in Italy. In 400BC, the city of Rome was a smallish city-state of some 25,000 living in humble homes of brick and timber, long ways to go to the eternal city of marble it later became. Nevertheless, in the last 100 years the Romans established hegemony over all the cities of Latin league, overthrew their monarchy, and emerged as a dynamic Republic. In 396BC, the brilliant Roman commander, Marcus Furius Camillus, conquered the Etruscan city of Veii, establishing a foothold for further northwards expansion, putting Rome on the collision course with the Celts. Modern historians are split on how the first Gallo-Roman war broke out. Some claim that a Gallic tribe invaded Rome on behalf of Dionysus I, the tyrant of the Greek city of Syracuse, who wanted to knock the Romans down a peg for supporting his rivals in Messina. Others claim that the war-like Celts needed no incentive to invade Rome, and did so simply for glory and plunder. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus the seeds of conflict were sown when the King of the Etruscan Clusium, Lucumo, engaged in a dalliance with a married woman. Her aggrieved husband, an influential merchant named Aruns, went north to the Gauls of the Po Valley, seeking to use them as his instrument of revenge by convincing them to attack Clusium. Aruns' call was answered by King Brennus of the Senones, who was happy to make war on Clusium, coveting its riches and fertile lands. The people of Clusium were

alarmed by the Gallic horde, and called to the Romans for aid. In response, the Roman senate sent a trio of ambassadors to serve as neutral mediators. When the ambassadors asked Brennus why he made war on Clusium, he tersely replied “for the same reason Rome conquers her neighbours”. Tensions soon flared, and an armed quarrel broke out between the representatives of the Clusians and Senones. In the heat of the moment, one of the Roman ambassadors slew a Senone warrior. Brennus was infuriated by the breach in diplomatic conduct, and sent envoys to Rome, calling for the extradition of all three ambassadors, but his demands were refused. Thus the Gauls declared a blood feud upon the Romans, and advanced southwards to settle the score. The military tribunes of Rome quickly mustered an army and marched out to meet their foe. In the fifth century BC, Rome was centuries away from fielding the professional legion: Wealthier citizens armed themselves in the style of the Greek Hoplite, but the majority fought with various destandardized weapons and little protection. They made their stand on the river Allia. In modern historiography, our understanding of the Battle of the Allia relies heavily on the accounts of two Roman historians, Livy and Diodorus Siculus. Neither of these can be taken wholly at face value since both authors have their inherent biases and, more importantly, lived over three centuries after the events in question, meaning that neither penned down first-hand accounts of the battle but rather chronicled a story which by their time, had already been passed down for countless generations. Nevertheless, our interpretation of this battle will anchor itself mainly on Livy’s testimony in the interest of simplicity and linearity. And a scathing testimony it is, for Livy has almost nothing good to say about his Roman ancestors. After choosing the place in which they would meet their barbarian nemesis, the consular tribunes in charge of the Roman army behaved with flagrant negligence, failing to set up a proper camp, build defensive ramparts, or perform the proper sacrificial rites to their Gods to ensure that divine fortune was on their side. Moreover, Livy also criticizes the Roman battle formation, which consisted of a single line, presumably with those rich enough to have armed themselves with a full Hoplite’s panoply forming into a standard phalanx formation. The tribunes stretched out their wings, with the right being positioned on reserve on a nearby hill. This was done to prevent being outflanked but only contributed to the weakening of the center, which was now spread far too thin to form an effective defensive lockstep. Perhaps the most egregious mistake the consuls made was to position their army perpendicularly across the Allia river, which put their backs to its distributary, the mighty Tiber. In so doing, the Romans had essentially limited their own maneuverability and backed themselves against a wall. On July 18th, Brennus’ Gallic host crested over the horizon, likely outnumbering the Romans significantly. No enemy the Romans had faced thus far, be they Etruscans, Sabines or their fellow Latins, commanded the petrifying aura of the pale, long-haired giants who now stood across the field from them. Fear spread like a pox through the Roman line, with Livy claiming that the Gauls’ ‘hideous howls and discordant clamour filled everything with dreadful noise.’ After performing a quick survey of his enemy’s battle formation, Brennus quickly deduced that the Roman right flank was the greatest threat, for if he attacked the Roman center head-on, the reserves on the hill could circle down and attack him from the rear. In typical Gaulish fashion, Brennus addressed this hazard directly, ordering his fiercest soldiers to charge the hill and dislodge the Roman right from its position. Thus did the Gauls begin their thunderous charge, howling, screaming and blaring their carnyxes. As the Celtic warriors closed in, they unleashed a withering hail of Javelins upon their foes, which thinned out their quarry enough that when they charged up the bluff and slammed into the reservist line, the legionnaires almost immediately

broke. Seeing their brethren on the right collapse, morale on the Roman left and center plummeted. Consumed by paralytic terror, they began routing, seemingly before the Gauls had even engaged them. They turned their backs on their foe and fled, only to find themselves up against the banks of the Tiber. Thousands of Romans attempted the river crossing, with many drowning, weighed down by their armour, and many more cut down by the pursuing Gauls as they clogged up the riverbank in their chaotic, panicked retreat. However, after the pandemonium and slaughter had subsided, most of the Roman army had escaped to the other side of the rapids, where they fled behind the walls of Veii, a city Rome had conquered not one decade prior. The Battle of the Allia was a testament to how effective Gaulish fear tactics could be upon an enemy who was unprepared to face them. For centuries thereafter, a fear of Celts would be ingrained into the Roman national psyche, as the reckless ferocity of the Gallic horde rendered them into something akin to savage bogeymen: the wolves prowling at civilization's door. After his decisive victory, King Brennus led the Senones to Rome, and put the city to the torch. It was the first time the eternal city had ever been sacked, and it would take 800 years for any other foreign army to ever do so again. According to later Roman historians, a surviving core of senators and able-bodied citizens were able to retreat to the citadel on the Capitoline hill to mount a defense, watching helplessly while the rest of the city was thoroughly pillaged. The Senones twice tried to take the Capitoline, first with a frontal assault which was repulsed, and second with a night-time infiltration, which was famously foiled by the honking of the Sacred Geese of Juno. After many months of impasse, both sides had become emaciated by starvation and plague. The Romans resolve broke first, and they agreed to pay the Senones a sum of 1,000 pounds of Gold to make them leave. Here, Roman historian Livy claims that the Gauls weighted the measuring scales to cheat the Romans out of more tribute than had been agreed upon. When the Romans protested, Brennus threw his own sword onto the scale, bellowing: "vae victis": woe to the vanquished. According to Diodorus of Sicily, it was at exactly this moment Marcus Furius Camillus arrived with a relief army. He defiantly threw his own sword on the scales, and declared: "non auro, sed ferro, recuperanda est patria" - We defend Rome not with gold, but with iron. He then attacked the Gauls, and drove them out of the city. These traditional recantings of the Senones' war are likely the result of Roman propaganda. Livy and Diodorus authored their accounts centuries after the sack happened, and were probably trying to salvage some honour out of a particularly dark chapter of Roman history. In particular, Camillus' last-minute heroics were likely a complete fabrication. Simply put, the true summary of the events is probably as follows: Gauls crushed the Romans, looted their city, blockaded the Capitoline hill, got paid, and went home. This simplistic take is plausible, because the Gauls were a simple war party that probably sought nothing more other than to obtain plunder and return to their families. It would take a generation for Rome to recover from the devastation brought upon it by the Senones, while conversely, Gallic influence in Italy grew ever stronger. Throughout the 4th and early 3rd centuries BC, Celtic war-parties regularly plundered into the Roman hinterlands, while Gaulish mercenary groups became a staple contingent of many anti-Roman factions, such as the Greek Tyrants of Sicily, and a certain up-and-coming Carthaginian thalassocracy. Rome would not be the only classical civilization the Gauls would make war on. Let us now shift our focus eastwards, to the land of Philosophers and Hoplites, and talk about the Celtic invasions of the Ancient Greek world. Gallic war parties had entered the northern Balkan Peninsula in the early 4th century BC, where they would spend the next century in sporadic warfare with the Illyrians, Thracians, Paeonians, and other local native

peoples. According to the Greek historian Strabo, in 335 BC, a certain Alexander, yes, that Alexander, was encamped along the Danube river, fresh from his victories in his campaign to subdue the Illyrian tribes. There, he received an envoy of foreign barbarians, tall, muscular Gauls, who had come to seek the Macedonian King's friendship, for they respected his prowess as a leader of warriors. As the story goes, Alexander asked the Gauls what they feared most, expecting that they held him in such awe they would say Alexander himself. Instead, the Gauls haughtily replied that they feared only that the sky would fall on their heads. Nevertheless, the Celts were always ready to respect a worthy warrior, and showed great admiration for the Macedonian King, daring not to invade Greece while he ruled. Alexander would go on to conquer most of the known world, only to die prematurely in Babylon, and as his former territories became divided by infighting among his former generals, the rich lands of Hellas entered the crosshairs of Gallic warlords looking for easy plunder. In 298BC, the Gallic chieftain Cimbaules led a war party that pillaged its way through Thrace and Macedon, only to be stopped in its tracks by the army of the Diadochi King Cassander on the slopes of Mount Haemus. Nevertheless, during this expedition the Gallic Serdi established a foothold in Thrace, founding the settlement of Serdica on the site of the modern day Sofia. The next Celtic wave would arrive in 281BC, when a horde of 85,000 men, mostly of the Boii and Volcae tribes, split into three contingents and simultaneously invaded Paeonia, the rest of Thrace, and Macedon. During this expedition, a war chief known as Bolgios faced down the army of Ptolemy Keuranos, current king of Macedon, and son of the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. In the battle that followed, the Macedonian King himself was thrown from his war elephant and hacked to pieces by Gallic warriors. These initial successes increased the appetite for further incursions into Greece, and a year later, a Chieftain known as Brennos began calling for another southwards expedition. According to legend, Brennos called for an assembly of Gallic Chieftains, and presented before them a group of Greek captives, who were weak in body. He juxtaposed them with his finest, most well-built warriors, using this as proof that the Greeks were a weak people compared to the Gauls, and could be easily overrun. By 279BC, Brennos had successfully assembled a massive tribal coalition. Ancient sources claim his army amounted to a mind-boggling 150,000 warriors, but modern estimates give us a more realistic figure of 50,000. Brennos' pillaged through undefended Northern Greece unimpeded. Some stories claim that, when questioned on the sacrilegious nature of looting the temples, Brennos' pithily remarked: 'The Gods, being rich, ought to be generous to men'. As is par for the course, the story of the Gallic invasion of Greece survives almost exclusively through the writings of Greco-Roman authors. In this case, in the works of Pausanias, a Greek Geographer living in Roman-ruled Anatolia during the 2nd century AD. As it was with Livy and his account of the Sack of Rome, Pausanias lived nearly 400 years after the events he was describing and is prone to various anachronisms and biases, especially in describing the ostensibly savage and barbaric Celtic invaders. Nevertheless, to maintain a straightforward narrative, our interpretation of Brennus' campaign will anchor itself to Pausanias' version of events. Brennus' horde seems to have met little to no resistance as they ravaged their way throughout the region of Thessaly, where no army large enough to stop them could be mustered. Indeed, it is likely that some Thessalians even joined the Gallic horde, either through coercion or of their own free will, hoping that by attaching themselves to the Gauls, they might themselves become rich through loot and pillage at the expense of their fellow Greeks. Indeed, the Greeks were an endemically disunited lot, with the Hellenic Kingdoms of Macedonia and the Near East and the city-states of south-

ern Hellas always bickering and warring. Brennus was most likely fully aware of this and assumed that incorrigible Greek infighting would prevent any united defence force large enough to oppose him from forming. This assumption would prove to be erroneous. As a massive horde of barbarian marauders set the Macedonian and Thessalian countryside ablaze, the Greek city-states around the Malian Gulf began to feel the heat. Thus, in an act of uncharacteristic cooperation, a defensive alliance was formed: a political miracle likely achieved by the Athenian statesman Demochares. According to Pausanias, this alliance consisted of the following: 10,000 fully armoured heavy hoplites and 500 cavalry from Boeotia, 3000 lightly-armed footmen and 500 cavalry from Phocis, 700 footmen from Locris, 400 hoplites from Megara, and 7000 hoplites and 800 light footmen from Aetolia. Athen's contribution to the ground forces, consisting of 1000 hoplites and 500 cavalry, was relatively small, but they also deployed a large squadron of trireme warships to the war effort. As the Gauls finished stripping Thessaly bare of its riches and began moving south, the Greek allies moved into position, deciding to stop the Gallic advance at none other than the narrow pass of Thermopylae. Stop us if you've heard this one before. Soon, the allies had encamped in the pass where King Leonidas had made his last stand against the Persians over 200 years earlier. There, the Greeks learned that Brennus' host was already in the neighbourhood of Phthiotis, so they dispatched their cavalry and 1,000 light infantry to destroy all the bridges across the Spercheios river in an attempt to delay the Gallic advance. This would not be effective, for Brennus was, as Pausanias begrudgingly puts it: "not utterly stupid, nor inexperienced, for a barbarian, in devising tricks of strategy." As a counterplay, the war chief picked out the best swimmers among his horde and deployed them to sections of the Spercheios which took the form of wide and shallow marshes. Here, the chieftain's hand-picked Gauls forded the river, amusingly using their large oakwood shields as pool floaties, paddle-boarding across the water. Where a Greek hoplite in full metal panoply would have had trouble making this aquatic crossing, the lightly armoured Celts suffered no difficulties doing so. Upon hearing that a vanguard of Gauls had made it onto their side of the river, the Greek advance force retreated back to Thermopylae rather than engage. Thereafter, Brennos had the local population of the Malian gulf rounded up and forced them to rebuild the bridges over the Spercheios so the rest of his army could cross. The Malians took to this task feverishly, terrified of Brennus and eager to get him and his destructive barbarians out of their territory so they could go pillage elsewhere. After crossing the Spercheios, the Gauls entered the hinterlands outside the city of Heracleia-in-Trachis, which they plundered. However, they did not stay there long, for Brennus had now directed his full efforts into driving away the army which opposed him. On one fateful day, as the sun rose over the Thermopylae pass, the Greeks saw a horde of spiky-haired mustachioed muscle men crest over the horizon. The Hellenes formed up: heavily armoured hoplites forming into a tight phalanx as they blocked the pass and waited for the coming charge, and thus the battle was joined. Pausanias' account of the initial Gallic assault begins with the cornerstone of Celtic warfare, a deafening, blood-curling charge. With reckless abandon, tens of thousands of Gauls barreled toward the Greek line, hurling their javelins into the phalanx, then clashing into their foe in a tidal wave of bare-chested fury. However, the enemy they faced was not the disorganized rabble of an infantile Roman republic but professional, disciplined men. Against the onslaught, the Greek phalanx held firm, their shields locked and spears bristling. The melee was brutal, with the Gauls struggling like madmen to break the Hoplite shield wall: "pierced by arrow or javelin, they did not abate of their passion so long as life remained. Some drew out from their wounds the spears, by

which they had been hit, and threw them at the Greeks or used them in close fighting.” But no matter how ferociously they hacked away at it, the phalanx would not break, and the heavily armoured Greeks could easily cut down their lightly armoured counterparts. Although both sides had cavalry, neither could use them, for the bottleneck made flanking manoeuvres impossible. Meanwhile, the Hellenic light infantry hurled javelins, slung rocks and shot arrows at the Gallic horde from behind the front lines, further thinning out their numbers, all while the Athenian Navy brought their ships as close to shore as possible and, from the decks of their triremes, “raked the Gauls with arrows and every other kind of Missile.” Just as it had been for the Persians three centuries earlier, for the Gauls, the pass of Thermopylae had become a killing field. After a day of fighting, Brennus had no choice but to concede that the Greek alliance would not be dislodged from their position and ordered the retreat. This withdrawal was not orderly, with the Gauls routing in a panic, “many crushed beneath the feet of their friends, and many others fell into the swamp and disappeared under the mud.” Ultimately, the Battle of Thermopylae was a decisive victory for the Greeks, with thousands of Gauls lying dead and minimal casualties on the Hellenic end. However, this victory had not ended the Gallic threat for good, for while Brennus had lost a significant chunk of his fighting force, and his men were thoroughly demoralized, he was not ready to pack up and go home. Knowing now that he would not be able to surmount his foe while they remained united and entrenched in a choke point, Brennus devised a plan to break up the Greek alliance. He dispatched a large contingent of footmen and cavalry under the command of two chieftains, Orestorius and Combutis, to make for the nearby region to Aetolia and put it to fire and sword. This they did, crossing the bridges on the Spercheius, whereupon they cut through Thessaly and descended upon the Aetolian city of Callium, subjecting it to a brutal sack, a scene Pausanias describes viscerally: “The fate of the Callians at the hands of Combutis and Orestorius is the most wicked ever heard of, and is without a parallel in the crimes of men. Every male they put to the sword, and there were butchered old men equally with children at their mothers’ breasts. The more plump of these sucking babes the Gauls killed, drinking their blood and eating their flesh.” This brutality’s intended purpose worked, for it compelled the Aetolian contingent at Thermopylae to break camp and rush to defend their homes. Still, it also stirred up a hornet’s nest, which would descend upon the Gauls in a swarm. Horrified and outraged by the fate of Callium, the rest of Aetolia’s cities began mustering up impromptu militias, with women taking up arms alongside their men, driven by righteous fury to repel the invaders. Realising that the Gallic sword was dangerous only at close quarters, the Aetolians resorted to skirmishing tactics. At a place called Kokkalia, they ambushed the Gallic column, raining javelins, slings and arrows upon the Gauls, who were shredded due to their lack of armour, “protected by nothing but their national shields.” Over half of Orestorius and Combutis’ raiding party was slaughtered, with the rest limping back to rejoin Brennus at Thermopylae. Meanwhile, Brennus had made a play to flank the Greek blockade, having intimidated some locals into revealing a path through Mount Oeta which would allow him to sneak around the Greeks at Thermopylae and attack them from the rear. In fact, this was the same pass that Ephialtes of Trachis had revealed to the Persians when he betrayed King Leonidas 300 years earlier. At the head of around half of his army, Brennus proceeded over the mountain road, leaving the other half of his forces in command of a man named Acichorius, who he commanded to attack once the enveloping movement was complete. Having learned from the defeat of their ancestors at Persian hands, this time, the Greeks had left this secret hill passage guarded: by the Phocian hoplites. Although

the Phocians fought bravely to deny Brennus thoroughfare, they were eventually overwhelmed and forced to retreat, but not before they managed to send runners to the Greek army about what was happening. Knowing they were about to be pincered, the Greeks withdrew, boarding upon the Athenian warships and sailing off to safety before they could be surrounded and slaughtered by the Gauls. Following this, Brennos made a final gambit, rearing his army eastwards for the sacred Oracle of Delphi, hoping that seizing the riches of Apollos' temple would salvage the expedition. Here, the united Greek force reconstituted itself and made a final stand. The Gauls were crushed, losing over 16,000 men in the battle and the ensuing retreat. In the eyes of the Greeks, it was a victory delivered by Apollo himself, who saw fit to punish the temple-defiling barbarians. Most of the surviving Celts retreated back to Thrace, while a completely dishonoured Brennos committed suicide. The Gallic invasion of Greece was a failure, but it had one significant consequence. Before the march on Delphi, a contingent of the Gallic horde, composed mainly of warriors from the Tectosages, Trocmii, and Tolistobogii tribes, had peeled off from the main invasion force and crossed the Dardanelles into Anatolia. Unlike Brennos' main force, which had come to Greece to raid and plunder, this group had come to settle. They built forts on the rugged hills of central Anatolia, and established permanence for themselves in the region by serving as mercenary shock-troops in the many wars being fought in the region between various Hellenic rulers. The region of Asia Minor these Gauls inhabited became known as Galatia, and the people who lived in it the Galatians. Remarkably, even though they were surrounded by foreign peoples, and isolated from the rest of the Gallic world, there is evidence that the Galatians of Anatolia retained their Celtic language and culture as late as the 6th century AD. In 279BC, the Celtic world was at its greatest extent. Spread out over a massive territory that overlapped the borders of modern nations as diverse as Ukraine, Czechia, Austria, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Turkey, Italy, France, Britain, Portugal and Spain. This was the golden age of the Celts, but like all golden ages, it was not to last. Brennos' defeat in Greece had proven something important: a well-trained, well-armed professional army, fighting as a single disciplined body, was fully capable of resisting the howling terror of the Gallic horde. This was a stark reality that the Gauls would soon learn well, as back in Italy, the certain Latin Republic was on the mend, and ready to take her revenge upon the barbarians who had once laid her so low. After winning the second Samnite war, the Roman Republic had expanded its territory and become the hegemons of central Italy. In 298BC, the third Samnite war began, with the Etruscans, the Samnites, and the Gallic Senones tribe all trying to curb the growing power of Rome. The Senones had been the terror of the Republic since they sacked Rome two generations earlier, and in 295, they massacred a Roman army outside the Etruscan city of Clusium, with Livy claiming that the heads of legionaries were mounted on the Gallic spears as they sang their triumphant war songs. Yet, the tides turned later that year, when the Senones and their Samnite allies clashed with the Romans outside Sentinum, where they were crushed. Taking advantage of their victory in the third Samnite war, the Romans pushed north, conquering the lands of the Senones by 283BC, where they established a military colony called Sena Gallica. The sack of Rome had finally been avenged. This was a critical junction in the Gallo-Roman story, for the Gallic illusion of invincibility had begun to dim. But what had changed since the sack of Rome to allow the armies of the Republic to finally be able to go toe to toe against the most terrifying warriors in the ancient world? After being humbled by their Italic cousins during the beginning of the second Samnite war in 315BC, the Romans realized that the phalanx they had inherited from the Etruscans and Greeks was

not a versatile fighting formation, especially on uneven terrain, or against a particularly malleable foe. With the goal of developing a more dynamic standing army, they created the innovative manipular system. Under this system, the standard Roman legions were organized into three rows, each one comprised of a checkerboard-like pattern of titular maniples, a basic unit of soldiers containing 120 heads. Compared to a Phalanx, which consisted of single, conjoined rows of men, the dynamic maniples were able to maneuver about more effectively by virtue of being separate units. The Manipular legions were organized into three standard rows. The frontlines were made up of hastati, fresh recruits. Behind them were the principes, who were battle-hardened soldiers. Finally, the back row was made up of triarii, the most veteran elites, and the last resort in battle. Originally manufactured to battle the mounted Samnites, the Manipular system soon proved effective against the Celts. As you will recall, Gallic warfare revolved around using fear tactics to plummet enemy morale before utilizing a single ferocious charge aimed to break their lines. This had worked in 390 BC, but the new Maniples were far better equipped to weather the Gallic onslaught. Their three-line reserve system meant that no single charge could rout a Roman legion, as even if the front line of hastati broke, there were fresh, experienced principes and triarii to replace them. Moreover, the general maneuverability of the Manipular Legions allowed them to counter the effectiveness of more mobile Gallic units like the war chariot. It should, however, be noted that these innovations did not make the Romans invulnerable to Gallic warfare. As the protracted, centuries-long invasion of the Celtic world continued, many tribes would adopt styles of battle better suited for countering the professional Roman war machine, scoring many victories that delayed the Imperial advance into Gaulish lands. In the decades after their conquest of Senones' territory, Rome would become entangled in several other wars, first locking horns with Pyrrhus and his lumbering war elephants, then with Carthage for the first time. By the end of these wars, Rome had become the undisputed master of peninsular Italy, and the way into the Celtic lands of the Po Valley was now open. The primary trigger for the next great Celtic war came in 232, when tribune Gaius Flaminius - who would later die in battle against Hannibal at Lake Trasimene - proposed a bill that would distribute land in former Senone lands in Picenum between the Roman colonists. This proposal was incredibly popular among many segments of the population, but many others fiercely resisted it, fearing the barbarians' reaction. They were right to be anxious. Many of the Celtic tribes, observing this blatant repopulation of lands which had so recently belonged to their own kinsmen, became convinced that Rome was now waging war against them not simply for 'sovereignty and supremacy', but for the purpose of their complete annihilation or expulsion. Not willing to go gently into that good night, two of the largest Italian Celtic tribes - the Insubres and the Boii - concluded a strong alliance and then sent representatives into Gaul. They eventually reached the territories of a combative group of Celts living in the Rhone valley known as the Gaesatae - fearsome profit-minded warriors who frequently sold their violent services to the highest bidder as mercenaries. Upon reaching Gaesatae lands, the Italo-Celtic ambassadors received an audience with the local twin kings - Concolitanus and Aneroestus - speaking of Italy's vast wealth and pointing out just how much treasure could be hauled back if they crushed the Romans and put the Peninsula at their mercy. Persuaded by the merits of this mercenary argument, the Gaesatae began mustering a truly massive and well-equipped army, drawn from their own lands and from Celtic tribes all over Western Europe. As this was happening in the north, the Carthaginian Empire took another step towards the Second Punic War by conquering most of Hispania, a process made considerably easier by the movement of so

many Celtiberians to join the two kings' rapidly growing invasion army. Suddenly beset by threats on each flank, Rome renewed its previous treaty with the Barcids of Spain in order to fully concentrate its resources on the impending Celtic invasion. The storm finally hit in 225BC when the plunder-hungry 50,000 strong Gaesatae-led horde crossed the Alps and joined their brethren in Italy. Rome responded militarily by sending Consul Lucius Aemilius Papus with a 40,000 strong army to Ariminum, where he awaited the Celtic onslaught. In a flurry of activity, messengers were sent from Rome in all directions. One went to Sardinia recalling the Republic's second consul of 225 - Gaius Atilius Regulus - who had been off quelling a revolt there at the time. Other hurried emissaries reached the courts of the Gaesatae's rival tribes, including those of the Veneti and Cenomani who, upon receiving the Republic's offer, turned against their Gallic brethren and threatened to invade their lands. This forced the invading coalition to split its forces, leaving part of it in the Po Valley to defend against a possible Veneti invasion. Even in these early days, Rome's diplomatic lethality was one of its sharpest weapons. The Gaesatae, Insubres, Boii and many other tribes assaulted Etruria as one, overwhelming the small defensive army there and ravaging its hard-gained wealth. Meeting little opposition, the barbarian horde began a march which must have invoked the darkest nightmares of every Republican citizen - directly on Rome itself. However, upon reaching Clusium - a scant three days' travel from the sacred capital itself - the Celts received reports that another 40,000 strong Roman allied army of Sabines and Etruscans was tailing them. Turning to meet the threat, the twin kings came into close proximity of their enemy at dusk before encamping for the night. At this point, the 'uncivilised' barbarians used a wily trick. After lighting all of their fires, the Celtic cavalry was ordered to remain in camp until daylight rendered them visible. However, the foot warriors withdrew to a nearby town called Faesulae where they hid in ambush, constructing a field of traps along the path where they expected Rome's legions to march. When morning came, the unknown Praetor observed an apparently vulnerable exposed formation of mounted enemy troops. Anticipating an easy victory, he began pursuing the Celtic horsemen who rode away towards Faesulae at his advance. Unfortunately for him, the Roman legions were struck by surprise upon passing the booby-trapped area and, after a fierce fight, were destroyed with 6,000 dead. The surviving Roman forces retreated to safety on a nearby fortified hill, but were surrounded and besieged there by the Celts. However, exhausted by the nighttime exertion and desiring rest, the victorious attackers left a cavalry detachment to keep watch over the hill before retiring for the night. If the outmatched Romans did not surrender by daybreak, they would be attacked. During the dark hours, however, Lucius Aemilius' consular army arrived in the area, having received word of the invasion of Etruria while he was stationed at Ariminum. After constructing his own camp in visible range of both the Celts and the desperate Roman army remnant, the consul quickly received messengers from the latter informing him of the situation. Therefore, Aemilius had his military tribunes arrange his infantry in battle formation at daybreak, while he personally led his cavalry towards the Roman-held hill. At once realising that the two enemy forces collectively came close to rivalling their own strength, King Aneroestus advised retreat back home as to not risk all of the gathered loot. Concurring with their chief, the Celtic army began withdrawing north along the western coast of Italy. As they did, Aemilius joined the survivors of the Faesulae disaster to his own army and began following the barbarians, declining any pitched battle in favour of constant harassment of the enemy rear and catching isolated foraging parties when the opportunity arose. As the leisurely Gaesatae retreat north continued, Aemilius' consular colleague Regulus

arrived in Italy from Sardinia by sea and reached the city of Pisa - he was now directly in the path of the marauding invaders, but didn't know it yet. Marching briskly in the direction of Rome, Regulus and his 40,000 encountered and defeated a small advance unit of foragers near Cape Telamon and took a few prisoners. Upon interrogation, these barbarian captives revealed details of everything that had occurred as well as the current situation - the main Celtic army was nearby and approaching fast with Aemilius biting at their heels. After initial surprise at the foe's close proximity, Regulus was overjoyed at the strategic situation. With himself blocking the road of retreat and his colleague to the enemy's immediate south, there was a very real opportunity for total victory. After concluding the interrogation - probably resulting in many dead Celts - Regulus drew up the infantry of his citizen legions into a standard battle formation - velite skirmishers up front, hastati new bloods in the first line, seasoned principes in the second, and grizzled triarii veterans in reserve. As the legionaries began marching down the Telamon road in a typically disciplined Roman style, Regulus personally led the mounted equites to occupy a strategically placed hill just off the path, rushing the effort because of his eagerness to secure the position before the Gaesatae and their allies arrived. In the fog of war, the approaching Celts were unaware of Regulus' army in front of them and, upon seeing the cavalry seizing the hill in front of them, believed the horsemen were actually units of Aemilius who had managed to slip around during the night. To regain the hill from this apparently isolated force, the two Celtic kings sent their own cavalry and some light infantry to lock the landmark down, but faced suspiciously more resistance than they initially expected. Nevertheless, they slowly gained ground. After a short time, a Roman soldier was captured and taken to the Gaesatae leadership, revealing the presence of Regulus' second consular army not far away. Suddenly realising the dire truth of affairs - that they were about to be crushed between two Roman armies, one on each side - the Celtic leadership deployed for battle in an unconventional two-line formation. One line, consisting of fearsome, fully naked Gaesatae warriors and the powerful Insubres, faced south, while the other, made up of Taurisci and Boii units, faced north. Wagons and chariots were on either wing. Upon witnessing this peculiar deployment, Regulus Aemilius instantly realised that his consular brother must have been nearby and set out to assist him. To do that, he drew up his own legions to face the Celtic infantry while what cavalry he had left rode to assist his colleague on the hill, further intensifying the struggle there. As the Romans slowly began to turn the tables on their Celtic opponents in the struggle for the hill, Consul Regulus was slain in the melee, last seen fighting with bravery and courage. Although his head was cut off and taken to the two kings as a symbolic prize, it was not enough - soon the reinforced Roman equites threw the Celtic cavalry into a rout, secured the hill, and a strategic victory along with it. As soon as this happened, the legionary vice slowly began to snap shut as Roman infantry in 'checkerboard' formation advanced on the 'two-face' battle array of the Celts from both sides. As they came closer, a cacophony of terrifying war cries, deep trumpets and horn-blowers made vast amounts of noise in hopes of unnerving the Republic's soldiers, but still they advanced. When the velites of both Roman armies got into missile range, they unleashed a terrible storm of light javelins upon the cornered Celts. While the north-facing front rank composed of Taurisci, wearing light armour, cloak and donning a shield were able to resist the steel storm, the naked south-facing Gaesatae immediately started suffering terribly. Because the Celtic shield failed to cover a warrior's entire body, many of the velites' missiles got through the gaps, striking exposed parts of the body such as legs and causing terrible wounds when they did. The larger and more physically imposing a Gaesatae warrior

was, the more chance a javelin had of striking them from a distance. Unable to effectively countercharge due to the distance and the relentless rain of iron from the sky, some of the naked warriors suicidally charged towards the enemy ranks, most being floored by ranged weapons after only a short time, while others reached the Roman light troops before falling. Having been scythed apart before the true legions had even been engaged, the battered Gaesatae withdrew behind their comparatively well-armoured Insubre comrades. At this moment, both sets of Roman hastati advanced, each throwing their lethal pilum javelins before drawing a fearsome thrusting sword. The battle was initially an event contest - Celtic bravery, physical fortitude and prowess in combat going up against the notoriously lash-laden discipline of Rome's world-conquering legions. Unable to break the Insubres, Boii, and Taurisci, who were so valiantly fighting for their homes as well as profit, the hastati withdrew and allowed their more experienced principes to advance. This impact gradually ground the stalwart Celtic line to dust, but they still did not break. As Polybius relates: 'Though being almost cut to pieces, they held their ground, equal to their foes in courage and inferior only, as a force and individually, in their arms.' However valiant their resistance, the Victory of Telamon was crowned when Aemilius' victorious cavalry charged down the hill and crashed headlong into the exhausted Celtic line. There was no contest, but the barbarian warriors on foot chose to die where they stood rather than fleeing, while the cavalry had no such compunction. 40,000 Celts were massacred at Telamon in what was probably one of the greatest battles fought upon Italian soil until that point. A further 10,000 defeated barbarians entered Roman captivity, including their King Concolitanus, who was left alive in preparation for a triumph. As a reward for his legionaries, the consul marched north and invaded Boii lands in the Po Valley, allowing the troops free reign to pillage, loot, and burn. With that done, he returned to Rome a hero and celebrated a gilded triumph, in which Concolitanus was the star exhibit. The defeat at Telamon shows us another disadvantage that hamstrung the Gauls: disunity. Celtic leaders systematically prioritized the needs of their own tribe, and even when different tribes worked together, it was always a temporary measure. Before the campaign, the Romans had paid off Boii's tribal rivals, the Cenomani and Veneti, to invade Boii lands, forcing the Boii to keep a significant portion of their warriors north to defend their borders rather than bear the full brunt of their army down upon Rome. Celtic disunity also played a major role in the disparity in the quality of equipment between the Roman and Gallic warriors. As we covered in the last chapter, the Celts were incredibly skilled metallurgists, but their fragmented tribal society prevented them from pooling their resources together to arm everyone equally. Rome, on the other hand, was a single united polity with advanced infrastructure and central administration, able to churn out professional legions equipped with standardized gear. After their victory at Telamon, the Romans pushed deep into the Celtic alps, occupying much of northern Italy. Not that they would be able to savour the sweetness of victory long, for only a few years later, round two would erupt between the Republic and Carthage, which this time was led by Hannibal Barca. In one of the most iconic military maneuvers in history, Hannibal aimed to surprise the Romans by marching through the treacherous Alps. There he was hailed as a liberator by the Boii and Insubres, who joined the Carthaginian army en masse. However, some tribes like the Cenomani declared their loyalty to Rome and thus had to be defeated by Hannibal's forces. Nevertheless, at the battle of Cannae, where 30,000 Romans were slaughtered, much of the Carthaginian army was composed of Gallic mercenaries, as well as Celtiberians, who we will get to later. Since we all know how Hannibals' story ends, let's fast forward a little bit. As Rome emerged out of the second Punic war

bloodied but victorious, they shifted their attention back northwards, where the Boii and Insubres continued to resist Roman expansion. Even the Cenomani, who had benefited little from their friendship with Rome, turned against their former allies. Nevertheless, Rome had put down these insurrections by 191BC, and finally conquered all the Gauls of northern Italy. Now, let us move westward, and explore a lesser-known theatre in which the Roman Eagle clashed with the Celtic boar-head. Since the dawn of recorded history, the Iberian peninsula had been a highly cosmopolitan land. By the 3rd century BC, it was home to a variety of Celts, and non-Celtic peoples like the Lusitanians, Turdetani, Aquitani and Iberians, whose languages and cultures probably pre-dated the arrival of the Celts in the region. The Celtiberians, who lived in northwestern Spain were a divergent Celtic culture probably created from intermixing between Celtic migrants and the native Iberians. They spoke a Celtic language that was very different from the Gaulish languages of the rest of continental Europe. However, it should be noted that Iberia was also home to various Celtic speaking communities whose material culture was more in line with the mainstream La Tene complex seen throughout the rest of Europe. Much like in Italy, the story of Celts in Iberia is tied to the eternal struggle between Rome and Carthage. The North African empire had had colonies along the peninsulas' south coast for centuries, but during the interbellum between the first and second Punic wars, Hamilcar Barca and his young son Hannibal had pushed deep inland. Celtiberian tribes like the Carpetani put up fierce resistance but were soon subdued. Iberia would consequently become one of the most crucial theatres of the second Punic war. After Rome emerged bloodied but victorious in their epochal struggle against Hannibal Barca, they replaced Carthage as the new foreign overlord of southern and eastern Iberia, which they divided into two regions: Hispania Citerior: ‘nearer Spain,’ and Hispania Ulterior: further Spain. It did not take long before the proud native peoples of the peninsula began rising up in defiance against the Roman eagle. It bares mentioning that, as with every other Celtic war we have covered so far, the story of the Republic’s conquest of Iberia comes nearly exclusively from Roman sources, in this case mainly the aforementioned Livy and the Alexandrian historian Appian. As such, the following tale comes with the usual disclaimers that one must provide when using culturally biased writers living several generations after the events they write about to piece together ancient history. Among the first native peoples in Hispania to rebel against Rome were the Turdetani, a non-Celtic indigenous people living in the modern Andalusia region. The Turdetani hired over 10,000 Celtiberian sellswords who lived adjacent to their lands to boost their numbers. Indeed, mercenary work was a profession for which the Celtiberians had made themselves famous during the Punic wars. Before long, huge revolts had spread like wildfire across both Hispania Citerior and Ulterior, with the Iberians of the east coast rising up as well. Several victories were won against the Roman garrisons in the region, and the governor of Citerior, Gaius Sempronius Tuditanus, was slain in battle. When word of the severity of these uprisings reached Rome, the senate responded by appointing the iron-fisted Consul, Marcus Porcius Cato, to bring the quarrelsome natives to heel. At the head of an army consisting of two Roman legions, 15,000 Latin allies, 800 cavalry and 20 warships, Cato made landfall in the Gulf of Roses in 195 BC. The Consul quickly secured a foothold in the land of the indigenous Iberians. Establishing a base of operations in the Greek city of Emporion, he used a shrewd mix of diplomacy and psychological warfare to secure the loyalty and submission of some Iberian tribes, like the Ilergetes, while crushing openly rebellious tribes like the Indigetes. Within months, Cato had re-established Roman control over the east coast of Spain and then proceeded south to subdue the Turdetani. To that end, he allegedly

offered the Celtiberian mercenaries among the Turdetani a huge bribe to have them stand down, which they did. Now fully isolated, the lands of the Turdetani were overrun. For the Celtiberians, the short-sighted decision to take Roman gold would cost them. Having put down the rebellions of the Iberians and Turdetani, Cato now turned upon them. Marching his army northwards, he successfully besieged and captured the fortified hill-town of Segontia, the center of power of the Celtiberian Arevaci tribe. Cato proceeded up the Ebro river, the heartland of Celtiberian territory, forcing the other tribes in the area to tear down the walls of their hillforts and submit to the authority of Rome. During his time in Hispania, Marcus Porcius Cato claimed to have ‘destroyed more cities than he had spent days in Hispania,’ having put over 300 native settlements to the sword. His suppression of the first wave of anti-Roman rebellions on the peninsula was brutal. It ensured that the young Republic’s presence in the region would be permanent. Still, it did not, by a long shot, put a permanent end to the endemic resistance against Roman rule. In 194 BC, Cato was called back to Rome and replaced by his political rival, Publius Cornelius Scipio, who took the position of Praetor of Hispania Ulterior. Scipio picked up where Cato left off, locking horns with the quasi-Celtic Lusitani tribes along the border of Hispania Ulterior and defeating them in battle near Ilipa near modern day Seville. Meanwhile, Marcus Fulvius Nobilior, the praetor of Hispania Citerior, had launched a campaign deeper into Celtiberian lands, ingressing into the territory of the Carpetani, the tribe which once put up a valiant resistance against the Barcids of Carthage. In response to this invasion, the local tribes rallied around a leader, who Livy identifies as ‘Hilerno’ and gives the title of ‘Rex.’ Forging together an anti-Roman coalition consisting of the Carpetani, Vattones, Vaccae and ‘Celtiberi’ tribes, Hilerno brought the fight to the Romans. Still, his warriors were defeated by Nobilior outside the fortress town of Toletum, and he himself was captured alive. After this, most Celtiberian tribes submitted to Rome nominally, but sporadic revolts and opportunistic raiding never fully ceased. Full-scale conflict would erupt again in 181 BC, when a Roman plan to transplant thousands of Italian settlers into Hispania caused a surge of resentment among the Celtiberians, provoking a massive uprising which historians today call the ‘First Celtiberian War’: the first of three such conflicts. Although Livy provides scant details about the coalition that rose up to oppose the Republic, neglecting to list which specific tribes took up arms or even the names of their leaders, he does emphatically state that they mustered as many as 35,000 men, the largest force the Celtiberians had ever before raised to fight Rome. At the time, the acting praetor of Hispania Citerior was Quintus Fulvius Flaccus, who had only around 10,000 troops at his disposal, consisting of 3,000 Roman legionaries, 6,000 Latin allies, and 500 cavalry. Levying troops from the local tribes friendly to Rome, he received an additional 6,000 native auxiliaries. Still, his forces were less than half that of the Celtiberian alliance which opposed him. Nevertheless, Flaccus doggedly pursued the initiative, marching his army into the territory of the Carpetani, and occupying the town of Aebura with little difficulty, bivouacking the majority of his army just outside its limits. A few days later, the Celtiberian host appeared on the horizon, setting up a fortified camp on a hill two miles from the town. Flaccus ordered his cavalry to scout out the size and fortifications of the enemy stockade but to retreat if engaged by the enemy’s cavalry. This was accomplished without incident, and for a few days, nothing happened. Then, after a prolonged standoff, the Celtiberians advanced out from their camp and formed a battle line, challenging the Romans to fight. Flaccus ordered his men not to remain in their camp. Over the next four days, the Spaniards sallied out of their camp repeatedly, but the Romans never responded. After a while, the natives gave up on

trying to goad their foe into battle. Both camps settled into a docile routine, regularly sending out their cavalry to scout the opposition but never interfering with one another. By turtling up in his camp, Flaccus lulled the Celtiberians into complacency by making them think they should not expect action soon. Once he was confident he had done this, he sprung his trap. Under cover of nightfall, he ordered his subordinate, Lucius Acilius, to take a contingent of cavalry and 6,000 native auxiliaries to make a circuit around the mountain which lay behind the enemy camp and approach it from the rear. From there, they laid in wait like a snake in the grass. To trigger the trap, Acilius sent a contingent of his cavalry to ride out in front of the enemy camp and challenge them to do battle. When the Celtiberians saw these horsemen before them, they immediately engaged, first sending out their cavalry to chase them down, followed by infantry, who formed a battle line and joined in the pursuit. Acilius' ordered his men to retreat, drawing most of the Celtiberian force as far away from their camp as possible. Once the Spaniards were half a mile out from their camp, Flaccus ordered the bulk of his army to engage, advancing upon the approaching enemy in three separate corps. Meanwhile, the Acilius' forces on the hill charged down into the Celtiberian stockade, where only 5,000 men had been left on guard. The ambush caught them completely by surprise, and the Roman equestrians were able to take the camp with little resistance before putting it to the torch. When the Celtiberians saw their stockade go up in flames, panic and dismay spread among them. Knowing they were now effectively trapped with nowhere to retreat to, their confidence crumbled. Nevertheless, as Livy admits, they resolved to fight to the end. The Celtiberians crashed into the Roman lines with reckless abandon and fought with such fury that it seemed they might break through Flaccus' lines for a time. However, before long, the Romans were reinforced by the soldiers garrisoning Aebura and Acilius' contingent, which smashed into the Spaniards from the flank and the rear, respectively. Now surrounded, the battle became a slaughter. Over 20,000 Celtiberian rebels died, while at least, according to Livy, Roman casualties were minimal. Through their victory at Aebura, the Romans dealt a mortal blow to the Celtiberian insurrection, but it still took another two years to stamp it out entirely. In 180, Flaccus' forces were ambushed in the Manlian Pass, and although they were able to fight off their assailants, they sustained heavy casualties in the process. In 179 BC, Flaccus was replaced by Sempronius Gracchus as governor of Hispania Citerior. Gracchus subsequently spent the first year of his tenure grinding his way through the territory of the Vaccae and 'Celtiberi,' where he was said to have destroyed over 300 native fortresses. Gracchus adopted a policy of aggressive Romanization in the Ebro river valley, ordering the construction of Roman towns on tribal land, and encouraging Celtiberian warriors to enlist in the Roman army. Moreover, he made most native tribes sign treaties which forbade them from building new fortified settlements, while taking members of their nobility back to Rome as hostages. Through these measures, Gracchus was convinced that he had prevented any further rebellions from happening in the future. He was wrong. In 155, the Lusitanians and the Vettones initiated a war with the Romans in Hispania Ulterior. Perhaps taking advantage of this distraction, the Celtiberian Belli tribe stopped paying tribute to Rome, and defiantly began building a 7KM long circuit of walls around their stronghold of Segeda, while convincing neighbouring tribes like the Titti to move into the area. By doing this, they aimed to turn Segeda into a nucleus of Celtiberian resistance against Roman rule. The Republican Senate was very aware of this, but when they protested that the denizens of Segeda were violating the treaty they had made with Sempronius Gracchus two decades earlier, the Celtiberians within pithily retorted that that treaty had forbidden them from

building new forts, not fortifying pre-existing towns. Naturally, the Romans would not stomach such insolence, and the second Celtiberian war began. The consul the Senate chose to put down this newest Spanish insurrection was Quintus Fabius Nobilior, who arrived in Hispania in early spring at the head of a 30,000-strong army. Upon arriving at Segeda, Nobilior found the city abandoned, for the inhabitants had known they would not finish building the walls before the Romans arrived. They had retreated northwards to Numantia. This large fortified city served both as the capital of the Araevaci tribe and as the economic, political and military heart of Celtiberian independence in the heart of Spain. There, the Segedans joined forces with the Araevaci and their allies and elected a war chief, Carus, to lead them into battle. With typically Roman ruthless efficiency, Nobilior had Segeda levelled before proceeding northwards to Numantia. While the Consul was marching his army through a thick forest, he was ambushed by Carus' army, comprised of 20,000 Celtiberian footmen and 500 cavalry, who poured out from the treeline and smashed into the Roman column with a fury. Appian, who recorded this encounter, did not specify the exact location of this forest. Wherever it was, it would forever be a legionary's graveyard, for Carus achieved a 'splendid victory' there, his warriors cutting down over 6,000 Roman citizens. Once the Romans began routing, the Celtiberians pursued disorderly, with the fearless Carus at the head, performing 'prodigies of valour' in combat, according to Appian. Here, the Roman cavalry, who had been guarding the baggage train at the rear of the column, regrouped and fell upon Carus, cutting him down. Now deprived of their leader, the rest of the Celtiberians withdrew. Nobilior's army, despite being heavily bloodied, would survive to fight another day. Nevertheless, for centuries thereafter, the Romans would refuse to engage in any battles on the day of the festival of their God Vulcan, for their humiliation at the hands of Carus' Celtiberians had occurred on that day. With their general dead, the coalition of tribes elected two new chieftains named Ambo and Leuco to take his place as leaders of the anti-Roman war effort. Meanwhile, en route to Numantia, Nobilior's legions were reinforced by 300 Numidian light cavalry and 10 war elephants from Rome's ally in North Africa. When the Romans arrived at the rebel stronghold, they found that an indigenous army had formed battle lines before the walls and intended to engage them in a pitched battle. Nobilior divided his army into two and advanced, placing the war elephants in the rear. Only when the two armies were about to clash did the consul order the Roman wings to part, revealing the great-trunked beasts. The natives, having never seen such monsters before, were 'thunderstruck' and fled back into their fortress. Nobilior ordered an assault on the walls, and a fierce battle commenced. In the ensuing chaos, Appian describes a rather chaotic turn of events: "one of the Elephants was struck on the head with a large falling stone, whereupon he became savage, turning upon his friends and destroying everything that came in his way, making no distinction between friend and foe. The other elephants, excited by his cries, all began to do the same, trampling the Romans underfoot, scattering and hurling them this way and that. The Romans took to disorderly flight. When the Numantines perceived this, they sallied out and pursued them, killing about 4000 men and three elephants. They also captured many arms and standards." At the end of the day, Nobilior had been hoisted on his own pachydermic petard, and Numantia had held firm against the Roman onslaught. Withdrawing in disgrace, Nobilior attempted an assault on the town of Axinium, which Appian enigmatically describes as "having accomplished nothing" moreover, while withdrawing from there, he was once again ambushed by the Celtiberians, who managed to slay his master of cavalry, Biesius. This landslide of Roman disasters compelled the town of Ocilis to defect to the rebels, another severe

blow to the Republic's war effort since their provisions were stored there. Completely hobbled, the Roman expedition could do nothing but retreat in despair to his winter camp, where many of his men died to food shortages and the blistering cold. Nobilior's campaign to subdue the Celtiberians had been a complete failure, and to no one's surprise, he was sacked the following year. In 152 BC, he was replaced as consul by Marcus Claudius Marcellus. Upon landing in Iberia at the head of 8000 infantry and 500 cavalry, Marcellus was immediately more successful than his predecessor. He managed to avoid ambushes shrewdly, and rather than assault the imposing walls of Numantia head-on, he ground down the natives' resolve to fight by laying waste to the relatively less defensible countryside. Eventually, it became evident that despite their valour and fighting spirit, the Celtiberians simply did not have the resources or manpower to continue fighting the Roman war machine, which would just keep sending army after army into their lands in perpetuity until they were ground down into dust. Thus, the Arevaci, Belli and Titti tribes approached Marcellus seeking peace. Marcellus sent the envoys of those tribes on to Rome, where they engaged in diplomacy with the Republican Senate. The ultimate end result was a return to the status quo ante Bellum, with the tribes reaffirming their adherence to the treaties their fathers had signed with Sempronius Gracchus a generation ago, which effectively put them back under indirect Roman overlordship. Marcellus' diplomatic acumen might have brought lasting peace if not for the abject brutality of his successors, Lucius Licinius Lucullus and Servius Sulpicius Galba, the praetors of Citerior and Ulterior, respectively. In 151, Lucullus waged a genocidal campaign in the lands of the Vaccae tribe, a grotesque endeavour that even Appian, a Roman writer, condemns as the folly of a man greedy only for fame and money. The governor of Citerior then linked up with his counterpart in Ulterior, where they put an end to the Lusitanian war, which had been raging on since 155 BC, promising the Lusitanians peace and leniency if they put down their arms and surrendered to Rome, only to commit a treacherous massacre once they did. One of the survivors of this massacre, a Lusitani named Viriathos, channelled his rage toward the Republic into another massive rebellion that would plunge the Iberian peninsula back into chaos for another twenty years. Soon, Celtiberians had joined the Lusitani, picked up their falcata blades, and resolved to make one last attempt to throw off the Roman yoke. The result was the third Celtiberian war, also known as the Numantine war, for the fortress of Numantia was once more the nexus of the indigenous war effort. And, poetically, the place where Celtiberian independence would end permanently. In 133, the great fortress city fell after a prolonged siege, mastered by the Roman statesman Scipio Aemilianus, starved its defenders into submission. After this, most of Hispania fell under Roman control. Nevertheless, insurrection and rebellion remained endemic in the region. The entire peninsula didn't come under the Empire's dominion until after the Cantabrian wars in 19BC, rounding out a mind-boggling 200 years of struggle. Paradoxically, one of the first territories the Romans conquered outside Italy was also the one it struggled the longest against to completely pacify, a testimony to the valour of the Iberians. It is now that our story shifts east, to the sun-baked highlands of central Anatolia. Here dwelt the Galatians, a collection of Celtic tribes who had been transplanted into the region as a byproduct of King Brennos' failed invasion of Greece in 279BC. Living amidst a sea of Greek-speaking successor states to Alexander's Macedonian Empire, the Galatians had adopted many of the trappings of classical Greek culture. They primarily made their fortunes as career mercenaries, as their Gallic ferocity made them the ideal shock troopers in any ambitious Macedonian Kings' army. For a century, the Gauls of Anatolia earned a fortune pillaging the fortunes of Greek rulers on

behalf of other Greek rulers. At the turn of the 2nd century, the Galatian tribes attached themselves to the army of the Hellenic worlds' mightiest King, Antiochus III of the Seleucid Empire. One has to imagine that the Gauls assumed this would be a contract like any other. They were wrong, Antiochus was engaged in a struggle for hegemony over the Greek-speaking world with none other than the Roman Republic. Inevitably, the Seleucid King's ambitions would turn to ash in his mouth when his cataphracts, war elephants, scythed chariots, and Gallic mercenaries were decisively defeated by the Romans and their Pergamene allies at the battle of Magnesia in 191BC. With the Seleucids humbled by the Scipio brothers, the Roman consul Gnaeus Manlius Vulso proposed that the Republics should expand into the highlands of Galatia. The official pretext for war was that the Galatians had fought alongside the Seleucids, but in truth, Rome was probably lusting after the rich plunder that the Anatolian Gauls had accumulated over their century of mercenary work. In the campaigning season of 189 BC, Consul Gnaeus Manlius Vulso began mustering his forces in the city of Ephesus, where he was reinforced by some auxiliary forces from Rome's ally: the King of Pergamon, Eumenes II. Vulso then set forth on his campaign, arriving on the border of the territory of the Tolistobogii: one of the three major Galatian tribes. According to Livy, who once more is the closest thing we have to a contemporary account of events, Vulso fired up his legionaries with a speech: "Of all the nations inhabiting Asia, the Gauls are pre-eminent for military fame. Their tall persons, their long red hair, their vast shields, swords of enormous length; their yells and dances, and the horrid clashing of their armour; all these circumstances are preconcerted to inspire terror. But let Greeks, Phrygians, and Carians, to whom these things are unusual and strange, be frightened by such acts: to the Romans, accustomed to Gallic tumults, even these vain efforts to strike terror are known. Once our ancestors fled from them, but it was long ago, when they first met them at the Allia. Ever since that time, the Romans drive them before them in dismay, and kill them like cattle." Despite making his utter contempt for the Celts of Anatolia obvious, Vulso still attempted to secure victory through diplomacy before attempting it by the sword. To that end, he sent envoys to Eposognatus, a Galatian chieftain friendly to Rome. Eposognatus promised to convince the other chieftains among the three tribes to submit peacefully to the Republic. Encouraged by this, Vulso marched inland, where he encamped his army near the Tolistobogii stronghold of Cuballum and awaited further word. Here, he was greeted not by friendly envoys but by mounted Galatian raiders, who launched a sudden attack on the Roman camp, inflicting light casualties before being driven off by the Roman cavalry. Vulso broke camp and marched on the Galatian-inhabited city of Gordion, which the Romans discovered to be completely abandoned. Eposognatus' messengers reached the consul and told him the obvious: that their chieftain had failed to convince the Galatians to submit to Roman authority. Furthermore, they reported that the vast bulk of the Tolistobogii and Trogmi, under the leadership of one Chief Ortiagon, had retreated to the mountain of Bithynian Olympus, where over 50,000 warriors, alongside their women and children, had entrenched themselves. Meanwhile, the Tectosages had retreated to Mount Magaba, adopting a similar defensive strategy. When Vulso's army reached the foot of Bithynian Olympus, they discovered that the Tolistobogii and Trogmi had encamped themselves at the summit of the mountain, where they had dug a ditch and erected defensive works around their position. They hoped that, by forcing the Romans to climb the steep and freezing slopes of the mountain, they would exhaust their foe and make them easier to repel. Vulso pitched camp five miles away from the mountain, then instructed his men to prepare many missile weapons, including javelins,

arrows, balls of lead, and stones. The Consul then mustered his cavalry and personally led two scouting missions up the slopes. On the first sortie, they were accosted and driven back by a vanguard of Gallic horsemen. On the second, Vulso was able to successfully reconnoitre, discovering that there were three viable ways to march his army up the mountain: “one at the middle of the mountain, where the ground was earthy, and two others, both very difficult, one on the south-east, and the other on the north-west.” After making the appropriate divinations and sacrifices, Vulso launched his attack, directing his army into three divisions. The Consul personally led the greatest part of his forces and marched up where the mountain afforded the easiest ascent. Meanwhile, he ordered his brother, Lucius Manlius, and his subordinate, Caius Helvius, to carefully climb the far more treacherous south-eastern and north-eastern slopes. Expecting the Romans to only advance up the facile path, the Galatians sent an advance guard of 4,000 men to garrison a hill overlooking the main road. Here, they encountered Vulso’s main contingent, and the battle was joined. Immediately, the Roman velites and the King of Pergamon’s Cretan archers and slingers began unleashing a barrage of missiles upon the Gauls. Arrows, javelins and lead balls shredded through them to devastating effect, for the Gauls had little body armour, and “their shields, long, but too narrow for the breadth of their bodies, ill-protected them.” When the Gallic vanguard attempted to charge down the Roman line, their numbers were thinned by more missile fire, then cut down by the Velite’s swords upon impact. Routed into a panic, the Gauls retreated back into their camp at the mountain’s summit. Around this time, Lucius Manlius and Caius Helvius had finished their ascents. All three contingents now closed in on the Galatian stockade and unleashed hellfire upon it. Javelins, arrows, rocks and lead balls rained upon the unarmoured and exposed Gauls, alongside their families, who were holed up in their camp with them. As a rather macabre anecdote, Livy notes that it was only by hearing the wailing and screaming of their women and children that the Romans knew their missiles were properly devastating the Galatian warriors. Eventually, once the enemy’s numbers had been properly thinned out, Vulso ordered the camp to be stormed, and the Romans overran it almost immediately. The Gauls fled from the stockade and fled down the mountainside in all directions, but thousands were cut down or captured. All told, in the Battle of Mount Olympus, 10,000 Galatians were slain and 30,000 taken into bondage. Roman casualties were minimal. Three days after crushing the Tolistobogii and Trocmi, Vulso marched for Mount Magaba to grind the Tectosages under his heel. The Tectosages sent envoys to the consul, offering peace and submission, but this proved to be a ploy to make him lower his guard: ambushing him with a large force of their cavalry while he was proceeding to a diplomatic parley. Vulso only managed to avoid being captured by the skin of his teeth, with a contingent of Roman foragers fighting off the Gallic Horsemen. After this, he doggedly proceeded on to Mount Magaba, where, employing the same tactics he had used at Bithynian Olympus, he crushed the Tectosage host. After this, total victory belonged to Rome, and the land of the Gauls in Asia was now de facto under the overlordship of the Republic. After Gnaeus Manlius Vulso’s triumph... Anatolian Gauls remained nominally independent, but increasingly bound to the will of Rome. After the Republic absorbed Pergamon in 133BC, the Galatians became a useful buffer state, who the Romans used to wage a proxy war on their Cappadocian and Pontic enemies. During the Mithridatic wars, the Galatians were faithful allies to Pompey the Great in his struggle against the Pontic King Mithridates. In 25BC, after nearly 150 years of gradual Romanization, Galatia was finally annexed and became a province of the Empire. Now, let us dial the clock back to the 2nd century BC and return to Northern Italy: With

the Alps in Rome's control, the proverbial door was open for its legions to march into the region of the Gallic world roughly corresponding to modern France, the very heart of the Celtic La Tene world. That catalyst for this came in the form of the Greek city of Massalia, which had a complicated centuries-long relationship with the Celtic tribes they were surrounded by. By the 2nd century BC, they had also become close allies and trading partners with the rising star that was Rome, so in 154BC when the Gallic Salluvii tribe threatened to invade them, the Greeks called for the Roman help. The Republic was happy for an excuse to send its legions beyond the Alps, and helped defend Massalia from the Salluvii twice, once in 154 and again in 125. After the second bout, the Romans 'magnanimously' offered to assume control of Massalia's hinterlands to protect them from further Gallic incursions. The Greeks, caring more about trade than territorial integrity, agreed. Meanwhile, the defeated Salluvii King, Toutomotulos, had fled north to the territory of the Allobroges, who were closely allied to the Arverni. This gave the Romans the perfect *casus belli* to pursue an expansionist campaign into the rich land of these two tribes. Under the pretext of chasing Toutomotulos, they invaded the territory of the Allobroges and Arverni, and by 121BC had conquered much of southern France. They incorporated it into their Empire as the province of Transalpine Gaul, which meant Gaul beyond the Alps, named in juxtaposition to Cisalpine Gaul, Gaul within the Alps. After the establishment of the Province of Transalpine Gaul, later renamed Gallia Narbonensis, the frontier between the Celts and the Romans remained relatively stable, and even friendly, for the better part of a century. One example of this was the Celtic federation of Noricum, which by the late 2nd century BC had developed a mutually symbiotic relationship with Rome. The skilled metallurgists of this region provided the Republic with much of the steel they needed to equip their legions, and in turn, the legions provided them with military protection. Consequently, when the Germanic Cimbri and Teutones people invaded Noricum in 113BC, the Romans were quick to defend their Gallic allies. At the turn of the 1st century BC, trade between Rome and various Celtic tribes had begun to flourish, with a complex system of trade networks and treaties existing between them. It can be easy to imagine commerce between these two as a one-sided relationship whereby the barbarous Gauls coveted the riches of the Romans, but this was not the case. The Gauls profited greatly off Roman wine, but Rome also had much to gain in Celtic goods, from their excellent metalwork to other radical Gallic innovations... like the wooden barrel. And soap. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Latin and Celtic worlds would deteriorate once more in the 50s BC, when a certain Gaius Julius Caesar became governor of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, setting the stage for perhaps the single most iconic campaign of conquest in Roman history. What began, at least on paper, as an expedition to prevent the migration of hostile tribes into Roman territory soon evolved into the full-scale subjugation of the entire Gallic heartland, resulting in an immortal duel between the erstwhile Triumvir and the valiant Arverni Chieftain, Vercingetorix. This is the most famous clash between the Celtic and Roman worlds, but it is also the one we will devote the least time to in this video, as we have already made a 90-minute long documentary exhaustively covering it, which we will make available in the description below. Regardless, we all know how this story ends. When Vercingetorix rode out of Alesia and threw his arms at the feet of the Roman consul who had defeated him, the independence of the Gallic world had come to an end. By the year 50BC, the Gallic world of continental Europe had all but disappeared. The Celtic territories of Eastern and Central Europe that had not been subsumed by Rome were eventually replaced by waves of migration by the Dacians, Iranic Sarmatian pastoralists, and early Germanic

tribes. The rest, of course, was now under the shadow of the Imperial Eagles' wing. By 50BC, Celtic continental Europe had been brought under the Roman Eagle through no small cost of blood, but this was not the end of their story. The native Celtic population still vastly outnumbered the colonial Latin presence, and their still functioning infrastructure was co-opted into the new Roman system. Major Gallic hillfort sites like Condatum, Lutetia, Lugdunum, Mediolanum, Serdika, and Ankyra were all turned into Roman towns, as clusters of wattle and daub houses were replaced with gridded streets, public baths, and gymnasiums. Despite the new management, these cities still served as the power center of a local Gallic tribe, much like the old hill forts. Outside of the cities, life did not initially change much for the Celts. The majority of them had been rural farmers, and under Roman rule, they lived in the same tribal villages as their ancestors, speaking the same Celtic languages, and cultivating the same crops. To the Arvernian cooper or the Armorican shepherd, it must have made little difference whether they paid a portion of their labours to a torque-wearing chieftain or to a toga-clad governor. As a result, the majority of the Gallic population would not fully Latinize for centuries. The assimilation did occur relatively faster among the higher castes as the Romans focused on controlling their subject peoples from the top down. Many Celtic chieftains had been regularly interacting with Rome for centuries and had already developed a substantially Romanized material culture and this process sped up as many Gallic rulers sent their children off to receive a Roman education. The army served as another vehicle of assimilation, as Gauls who had been part of the aristocratic warrior caste signed up for the Legion as auxiliaries, which served as an acceptable substitute to the proud Celtic warrior tradition. They learned Latin and provided offerings to the Imperial cult shrines present at every castra fort. Upon their retirement, they earned full Roman citizenship, cementing their integrated role in Imperial society. Apart from the mandatory observance of the aforementioned Imperial cult- which held the Roman Emperors as divine beings to be revered, subject peoples were otherwise free to worship whatever deities they wished, resulting in Celtic polytheism surviving well into the Imperial era. Romans and Celts drew parallels between their Gods: the thunder god Taranis was associated with the Roman Jupiter, while the war-like tribal protector Toutatis was likened to Mars. Some Celtic deities even became adopted by the Roman population, such as the Horse-Goddess Epona, who became the patron of equestrians across the Empire. However, there were limits to this cohabitation. The Druids, for example, were often the target of Roman persecution. Their suppression began under the reign of Emperor Tiberius, and intensified under Emperor Claudius. Anti-Druidic policies were usually enacted under the pretext of ending ritual human sacrifice, but realistically, it was because the Druids threatened Roman control. Indeed, several Gallic rebellions were attributed to the seeds of discontent that Druids sowed from the shadows. Nevertheless, theirs was a clandestine order that proved hard to stamp out, and it is exceedingly likely that for generations, the Druids secretly continued their teachings in hidden caves and secret forest clearings. During the reign of Claudius, select Gallic aristocrats were granted the privilege of joining the Roman Senate. Many snobbish senators protested this move fervently: how could the Emperor allow barbarians to sit amongst their hallowed ranks? In response, Claudius reminded them matter-of-factly that they themselves were the descendants of Umbrans, Sabines, and Samnites: Italic tribes the Romans had conquered and assimilated centuries earlier. To him, the Gauls were simply the latest in a long line of peoples to be integrated into the grand Imperial project. From the 3rd century AD, a new faith had taken the Empire by storm; whose practitioners worshipped a strange Levantine prophet that the Romans

themselves had put to death 200 years earlier. The Christian faith spread rapidly through the provinces, first as a persecuted underground cult, and then through a remarkable turn of fortunes, the state religion of the Empire. Imperial opinions towards old gods quickly soured, and by 392 AD, the devoutly Christian Emperor Theodosius banned all pagan practices entirely. This was probably the death knell of whatever remained of traditional Celtic polytheism on the continent. The next century would see the end of the world that the Gallo-Romans had lived under for generations. After the conquest of the Celts, the Germanic peoples had become the principal “barbarian” enemy of Rome. For centuries, many of their tribes had traded, integrated, or more often, warred with Romans along the frontier of the Rhine and Danube rivers. In many ways, the 400sCE was the Germanic century, as peoples like the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Franks took advantage of Imperial decay to pour into Roman territory and carve out Kingdoms for themselves, thereby bringing an end to the western half of the Empire. As the Germanic invaders of Europe settled into their newly conquered lands, they found themselves living amongst the direct descendants of Chieftains and Druids, men who had once called themselves warriors of the Senones, Insubres, Boii, and Arverni. But these people had been forever changed. Indeed, by the time the Western Roman Empire collapsed, the Celts of continental Europe had been under Latin hegemony for over 400 years, and Gaulish culture had become little more than an echo. Its ancient cults had been replaced by a monotheistic God from the Levant, and its language slowly declining in favour of the dialects of Vulgar Latin that would evolve into today’s modern Romance languages. It is possible that the Gaulish language survived in some isolated mountain villages as late as the 6th century AD, but as late antiquity transitioned into the middle ages, the Celtic identity had all but faded away, and a hybrid Germanic-Latin custom would be predominant culture upon which most of the Kingdoms of Early Medieval Europe were formed. And yet, the centuries after the fall of Rome did not bring about the extinction of Celtic culture in Europe, for there remained one foggy island on the edge of the continent where the native peoples still held to a distinctly Celtic language and identity. Indeed, the history and ultimate fate of the Celtic Britons is one we have not yet touched upon, for they stand apart from their continental cousins in two ways: they were never fully conquered by the Romans, and their indigenous identity outlived the Empire which subjugated them.

10 Norman Invasion of Wales - Medieval Celts DOCUMENTARY

In 1066, the history of the British Isles was forever changed. Under its new Norman-French overlords, the Kingdom of England would seek to accomplish what the Anglo-Saxon Kings never had: the total conquest of the Celtic Britons. However, while it took William the Conqueror only a few years to consolidate his rule over all England, his successors would need over 200 years to bring the princes of Cymru to heel. In this third episode on the history of medieval Wales, we will discuss the first wave of Norman invasions into the land of Cadwaladr's Dragon, and explore how the Cymri contended with their most fearsome foreign invader to date. In the year 1039, twenty-seven years before the coming of the Normans, a man named Gruffydd ap Llywelyn assumed the Kingship of Gwynedd. In the first five years of his reign, he managed to crush the Earl Leofric of Mercia's armies at Welshpool, subjugated the Kingdom of Deheubarth, and defeated a fleet of Viking marauders at the bay of Pwlldyfach. Gruffydd's relationship with the various Gaelicized Vikings on the Irish Sea was fluid, for in 1052, he allied with a large Hiberno-Norse fleet and raided the English border county of Herefordshire. Gruffydd of Gwynedd was able to get away with his brazen aggressions on English territory by playing the powerful lord of England off one another, raiding some, but forging important alliances with others, such as with Ælfgar, the Lord of Mercia. With the help of Ælfgar, he brutally subdued rebellions in Deheubarth and conquered Morgannwg. In doing so, the King of Gwynedd united all of Wales, the first monarch to ever do so. However, this grand unification would prove ephemeral. When Gruffydd's ally, the Lord of Mercia, died in 1062, Gruffydd was left in a vulnerable position. That same year, a certain Harold Godwinson, Earl of East Anglia and Hereford, launched a huge offensive into Wales, overrunning the country. A year later, Gruffydd's household, likely bribed by Harold, turned on their King, killing him. Had Gruffydd ap Llywelyn reigned for longer, then perhaps Wales would have crystallized into a more permanent state of unification, much like England and Scotland had in the previous century. However, this was not to be, and his death instead heralded a return to form, with Wales splitting along its traditional boundaries once more. Cruising on the glories of his successes in Wales, Harold Godwinson was chosen by the Saxon Witenagemot to be King of England after the death of his half-brother, Edward the Confessor. This reign would not last out the year, for in October of 1066, the Saxon warrior-ruler was slain in battle by a rival claimant to the throne, William, Duke of Normandy. Thus, centuries of Anglo-Saxon rule in England was brought to an end. Thereafter, the most powerful Kingdom in the British Isles would be dominated by the Normans: a French-speaking aristocracy. Shortly after his ascension, William of Conqueror, now William I of England, established new earldoms in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Chester, and appointed them to hardened Norman Knights who he entrusted with guarding the Welsh border. At the time, Wales was divided principally between Gwynedd, Powys, Deheubarth and Morgannwg. During William's reign, the border was relatively stable, and several Welsh kings, like Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth, entered into tributary relationships with the Anglo-Norman King. This, however, did not stop some ambitious Norman adventurers from thundering into Wales anyways. In 1072, the intrepid knight-errant Robert of Rhuddlan seized the easternmost portion of Gwynedd and erected a castle there, establishing himself as a local overlord. In general, Norman knights were a notoriously bellicose lot, and Wales represented a fresh

new frontier of land and wealth. From 1088 onwards, the Lord of Herefordshire, Bernard de Neufmarché, began ingressing into the territory of Brycheiniog. This provoked a fierce retaliation from King Rhys ap Tewdwr, but he was slain by Neufmarché's mounted knights in a battle at Aberhonddu in 1093. Rhys' death meant that Deheubarth was now vulnerable, and sure enough, the Lord of Shrewsbury soon overran it. Meanwhile, Robert of Rhuddlan had long since seized control of all of Gwynedd. In just a few years of ingress, the marcher lords seemed poised to conquer all of Wales. The Cymri, however, would soon make the Normans pay bitterly for their trespasses. Back in 1055, a child of Princely stock was born. Gruffudd ap Cynan was a descendant of Rhodri Mawr, but he was also an exile, having been born across the sea from his ancestral homeland, in the Norse-Gaelic town of Dublin. After an initial failed attempt in 1075, Gruffydd managed to seize the throne of Gwynedd in 1081. However, he would not enjoy his crown for long, for soon after, Robert of Rhuddlan conspired with several other Norman marcher lords to lure the new King of Gwynedd into a diplomatic meeting, only to treacherously imprison him. Thereafter, Robert of Rhuddlan became the foreign overlord of all Gwynedd, building Norman-style Motte and Bailey castles throughout the region, all while the rest of Wales was being overrun by other Norman marcher lords. If the traditional account is to be believed, then in 1093, after a decade of captivity, Cynan escaped his Norman captors, and on July 3rd of that year, killed Robert of Rhuddlan in a Skirmish on the limestone shores of the Great Orme. After this, Hugh 'le Gros' d'Avranches, Earl of Chester, became Gwynedd's new foreign overlord. That same year, the fire of rebellion erupted across all of the land of the Cymri. In southern Wales, King Cadwgan ap Bleddyn of Powys spearheaded a lightning campaign that saw his warband tear through Deheubarth unopposed. Simultaneously, the Britons of Gwynedd erupted into open revolt, allowing Gruffydd ap Cynan to throw Hugh of Chester out on his rump, and for the third time, reclaim his rightful throne. From there, he joined forces with Cadwgan, and together with the King of Powys, became a leading figure in the Welsh insurrection. To help his Marcher Lords subdue this rebellion, the King of England led two major expeditions into Wales in 1095 and 1097, but the Kings of Powys and Gwynedd wisely avoided direct battle with this royal army. Unable to feed and pay his men indefinitely, William was forced to depart both times, having accomplished little to nothing. Meanwhile, two other Norman armies were ambushed and annihilated by the Celtic Britons in two battles at Gelli Tarfawg, in Gwent, and Aberllech, in Brycheiniog. The tides began to turn in 1098, when the forces of Cadwgan and Cynan failed to take Castle Pembroke. From this fortress, the Norman marcher lords found a second wind when Earl Hugh of Chester and Earl Hugh of Shrewsbury joined their forces and pushed the Kings of Powys and Gwynedd all the way up to the isle of Anglesey. In this, the Normans were aided by an influential Welsh noble, Owain ab Edwin. The rebel Kings hired a fleet of Irish Vikings to push back against the two Hughs, however, the Normans simply bribed these Vikings to switch sides, and in doing so, forced Cynan to go into exile again after losing Gwynedd for the third time. However, in one of medieval history's more notable *deus ex machinas*, Magnus Bareleg, King of Norway, happened to be sailing through the Irish Sea with his fleet at the time. For whatever reason, he clashed with the Normans off Anglesey, defeating them in a battle where Hugh of Shrewsbury was slain. Due to this, the Kings of Powys and Gwynedd were able to return from exile and drive the Normans out of Northern Wales. By 1099 it was clear, as things stood, that neither side had quite the combination of resources and strategy to completely subdue the other. So both Cynan and Cadwgan sat down for peace talks with representatives of King William II, son of William the

Conqueror. In the following proceedings, the crown of England and the Marcher Lords recognized Gruffydd ap Cynan as the rightful King of Gwynedd and confirmed Cadwgan ap Bleddyng as the legitimate ruler of Powys and Ceredigion. However, much of southern Wales would remain under the rule of Norman Lordships. For the next two hundred years, while Southern Wales remained under Norman domination, northern Wales would remain a center of Briton independence, and the border between these two spheres would become known as the Welsh Marches. Let us now take a break from the march of history, and look at a broader picture of what politics, warfare, and culture looked like in Wales during this time. Contrary to the picture we have thus far painted, life in the Welsh Kingdoms during the high middle ages was not just a raw struggle for survival. Despite the perpetual threat of the Normans, the Briton Kingdoms were experiencing a literary renaissance. In the timeline of Welsh poetry, the years between 1100 and 1300 AD are known as *Beirdd y Tywysogion*: the Poets of the Princes. During this time, Bards commanded a position of extreme respect in Welsh society, and Briton Kings would have a bardd teulu: a household poet. Occupying a prestigious seat on the King's royal court, it was the bardd teulu's duty to sing to the King's troops before they headed off into battle, as well as to sing privately for the Queen. Perhaps the most famous bardd teulu was Meilyr Brydydd, court poet of none other than King Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd. Welsh Kings in this era were also known to sponsor bardic schools, where ancient lyrical traditions were made accessible to more people than ever before. These schools were run by pencerdd: chief musicians, who sat in an honoured position next to the King's heir in the royal court. The incredibly dense corpus of Welsh-language literature and poetry from the 11th to 13th century which survives to this day proves that, despite the constant threats to their independence, the Kingdoms of the Celtic Britons were among the most educated and culturally sophisticated peoples of the high middle ages. Nevertheless, the shadow of the English Crown still loomed over them, and as such, they were also highly militarized societies, whose foreign policy revolved around a volatile relationship with the foreign commandants who occupied the southern half of their peoples' homeland. Over two centuries, the number of Norman lordships in Wales, the noble families which ruled over them, and the total amount of Welsh territory they controlled would all fluctuate. However, they all shared the same characteristics. For one thing, the Norman Lords in southern Wales were practically independent rulers. Although they owed nominal fealty to the crown of England, they were granted many privileges that their counterparts in England did not have, such as exemption from royal taxation and the right to pass their own laws. Most importantly, Norman marcher lords had the right to build their own castles, a jealously guarded privilege which the English Crown was incredibly hesitant to afford to its vassals in England. The reason for this was that castles were the Norman's favoured method of establishing dominance in the lands they conquered. In England itself, the English Kings saw little need to allow his vassals to build too many castles, for it would empower them and risk rebellion. Moreover, since the Anglo-Saxon peoples had already been thoroughly tamed, there was little need for them. However, in the Welsh frontier, where the local Celtic Britons were still wild and defiant, the English Crown allowed their frontier lords to have a freer hand. To this day, modern Wales still has the highest concentration of castles of anywhere in Europe, a testament to how many fortifications the Normans had to erect to fully subdue the native Britons. It should also be noted that, in the parts of Wales ruled by Norman lords, the linguistic and ethnic makeup was still composed of a predominantly rural, Welsh speaking peasantry. Granted, King Henry I did encourage the migration of

Breton, Flemish and English settlers into Southern Wales, who tended to cluster around Norman castles. To this day, many of Wales' largest cities, such as Cardiff and Swansea, were originally settlements built up around the site of a Norman marcher lord's fortress. The relationship between the Norman Lordships and the Native Kingdoms in Wales was, at best, capricious. Often, there were long periods of peace and stability, usually secured with political marriages between Norman nobles and Welsh royalty. As a result, many prominent Norman marcher families, like the Mortimers, de Lacy's and Talbots, acquired a heavy quantum of Briton blood, and after a few generations, the conflict the Kings of Wales fought against the Norman occupiers was less a struggle against an alien entity, but more so a dynastic struggle against their own extended families. For indeed, despite frequent alliances forged from politically advantageous marriages, war was still a fact of life on the Welsh frontier. In this, the Normans were among the deadliest foes the Britons ever faced. Possessed of arguably the best shock cavalry in the world, the Normans in the 11th century had smashed the armies of Saxon Kings, Italian Lords, Arab Emirs, and even the mighty Eastern Roman Emperor. Thus, it is all the more impressive that the Welsh, a small, rural people on the very fringe of Europe, were able to resist the Norman juggernaut for over 200 years. In the early years of the march, the Welsh were unable to go toe to toe with the better equipped Normans in the open field. To compensate for this, the Britons tended to avoid open battle with the conquerors. Instead, they hid in the rugged hills, using avoision to lure Norman armies deep into their territory before harassing them with guerrilla tactics and annihilating them via ambush. Norman castles proved another significant challenge, but Welsh warriors were deadly lightning raiders, who could plunder and pillage the hinterlands around such fortifications with remarkable efficiency, and retreat back into the hills before the Norman force within could be mustered to confront them. After all, what use was having a castle to sit in if you were helpless to defend the lands around it? After a few decades of on-and-off fighting, some Welsh kings began to adopt Norman style warfare, managing to field Norman-style cavalry and build Norman-style castles in their domains. This cultural transaction went both ways, as the Welsh were highly renowned archers, and it is often argued that the Welsh Bow inspired the creation of the English Longbow, which in later centuries would decide the fate of some of Medieval Europe's most famous battles, like Agincourt and Crecy. In the year 1136, while campaigning in Normandy, King Henry I died without any male heirs. As a succession crisis threatened to grip the Kingdom of England, the Marcher Lords turned the majority of their troops eastwards. With the Norman presence in Wales suddenly reduced, fierce rebellions quickly erupted across nearly all of the southern occupied territories. By now, King Gruffudd ap Cynan, nearly 80 years old, was well past his prime. However, his sons, Owain and Cadwaladr, had since matured into fearsome and capable warriors. Riding south, the two Princes of Gwynedd linked up with King Gruffydd ap Rhys of Deheubarth. At a place called Crug Mawr, near the Castle of Cardigan, the Welsh army, now some 6,000 strong, met an equally large force of Flemish and Norman soldiers led by Robert Fitzmartin, Lord of Cemais. In the following battle, the Britons utterly annihilated the occupiers, reportedly slaying over 3,000 men, an astronomical killcount for the era. Following this stunning victory, the region of Ceredigion, occupied at some point in the early 12th century, was liberated from Norman rule, and annexed into the territory of Gwynedd. Ultimately, great Welsh victories like that at Crug Mawr, in hindsight, represented a delaying of the inevitable, as the interminable advance of the Anglo-Normans would ultimately continue until all of Wales was under English rule. Despite this, it would take another 150 years to fully

accomplish this, and for every inch of Welsh land taken, the Celtic Britons would make the invaders pay with a quart of blood.

11 Full History of the Ancient Britons: Origins to Post Rome DOCUMENTARY

Throughout its history, the British Isles have always been a land of many languages and many cultures, some older than others. With a presence in the isles that extends far into the mists of prehistory, the Celtic Britons predate the mounted Norman knights of Duke William, the Saxon Fyrs of Alfred the Great, the Great Heathen Army of Ivar the Boneless, and the Legions of Emperor Claudius. As this litany of conquerors might suggest, the Celtic Britons have spent much of their history in a steady retreat. However, there is so much more to their history than sorrow and loss. In this special long-form documentary, we will do justice to the fascinating society and history of the Celtic peoples of Britain, covering everything from their earliest origins to the wars with Rome, to the departure of the Empire, the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, and the mythical age of Arthur. In the modern day, the Celtic languages and cultures of Britain are highly marginalized. The insular Celtic tongues, once the predominant forms of speech across the entire British Isles, today survive in daily use only on its extreme westernmost fringes. Irish and Welsh are faring the best, with a relatively healthy population of speakers in the hundreds of thousands, but the fates of Scottish Gaelic, Cornish and Manx are fraught with far more doubt. Breton, a Celtic language brought to France's northwestern peninsula by British migrants in the early middle ages, also faces a bleak future. However, modernity has brought about a renewed interest in Celtic identity. Today, Celtic heritage is a point of pride for people not just in the British Isles but for tens of millions of people in Canada, America, Australia and even South America. Perhaps nowhere is the romantic appeal of Celticism more evident than in the corpus of modern fantasy. J.R.R. Tolkien, a proud Englishman, once remarked that "Welsh is of this soil, this island, the senior language of the men of Britain; and Welsh is beautiful." Tolkien's passion for all things Celtic is reflected in the social fabric of Middle Earth. Sindarin, the language of the Gray Elves of Beleriand, was constructed primarily from Welsh vocabulary, while influences from Brythonic and Gaelic folklore are ubiquitous throughout the Silmarillion. Later giants of the genre like The Witcher's Andrzej Sapkowski and Wheel of Time's Robert Jordan continued this Celtophilic trend. Consequently, fans of modern fantasy, even ones who don't know a thing about Celtic history or culture, have subconsciously learned to associate quintessentially Celtic motifs with the most ancient, mysterious and magical aspects of the literary worlds they love. All of this serves to labour the point that in this day and age, "Celtic" identity is widely considered a thing to be treasured, which makes it ironic that for all of ancient history, it never existed. Today, the word 'Celtic' enjoys widespread popularity as an ethnic identifier. However, when used in a historical context, the term becomes far more muddy. Although the countless tribes who dominated the forests and hills of Britain in the immediate centuries before the rise of Rome are posthumously labelled as 'Celts,' there is little evidence they considered themselves to be part of anything resembling a single ethnic group. Theoretically, if one acquired a time machine, travelled back to the Britain of the 1st century BC, and roamed the land speaking to the chariot-riding locals in the various dialects of ancient Brythonic, said locals would introduce themselves not as 'Celts,' an exonym first introduced in the writings of an Ancient Greek, but as warriors of the Catuvellauni, Iceni, Brigantes, Dumnonii, and so on. However, it cannot be denied that these enigmatic ancient peoples shared common religious practices, social customs, and closely related languages. Greek and Roman writers,

a certain Julius Caesar among them, noticed as much, while the material artifacts left behind for modern archaeologists to find also suggest a strong sense of cultural continuity between the so-called ‘Celtic’ regions of the ancient world. So, in the words of Professor Barry Cunliffe, a rockstar of European archaeology, professional historians who refer to the regionally diverse yet ultimately related peoples of iron-age Britain as ‘the Celts’ are “not being entirely outrageous.” Having now covered the disclaimer to end all disclaimers, let’s wind back the clock, and travel deep into the fog of prehistory, where the story of Britain’s oldest peoples begins. The Celts may be the oldest surviving culture in Britain, but they were not its first. The presence of homo sapiens on the Isles dates back at least 40,000 years. Agriculture and animal husbandry began developing during the Neolithic period, around 6000 years ago. These days, the stone age is a byword for a primitive, but the Britons of this era were anything but. They lived in sophisticated sedentary dwellings, had vibrant styles of artistic expression, and were capable of transporting massive, 25-ton standing stones over vast distances to create giant monuments, the most iconic of which you’ve probably heard of. Around the 2nd millennium BC, the Bronze Age came to Britain. Bronze is an alloy composed of two metals: copper and tin, and as it so happened, Cornwall and Devon possessed some of the largest reserves of tin in Europe. As such, Britain became the Silicon Valley of the Bronze Age world, the key terminus of a trade network with tendrils that spread across huge swaths of Europe and the Near East. Through intermediary peoples along the Atlantic coastline, British tin made its way as far as the great Levantine cities of Tyre and Sidon. Although the Britons of the stone age and early Bronze Age left plenty of cultural belongings behind for archaeologists to analyze, they were not literate societies, so ultimately, we know precious little about how they identified themselves and what language they spoke. However, most historians agree they were probably not yet Celtic at this time. This begs the question, when, how, and from where did Celtic culture arrive in Britain? The traditional narrative on the origins of the Celts is the Hallstatt theory, which postulates that Celtic culture originated in the first millennium BC in the heart of central Europe, from where it spread on the backs of ceremonial horse-drawn wagons throughout the Continent, eventually reaching Britain. However, in some circles, the Hallstatt theory has recently fallen out of fashion in favour of a newer theory labelled ‘the Atlantic Celts.’ This hypothesis argues that the origins of the Celtic language and culture lie not in Central Europe but along the continent’s west coast. Let us set the scene: It was around 1200 BC, and the Mediterranean World was on fire. Marauding Sea Peoples, whoever the heck they were, were devastating the coastlines of Egypt, Mycenaean Greece and the Hittite Empire, bringing those civilizations to their knees and collapsing the once-sophisticated trade networks which connected them. Meanwhile, in the West, things were comparatively hunky-dory. Much as it had been in the early Bronze Age, the Atlantic littoral during this time was a maritime highway upon which trade thrived. Between the pyrite deposits of western Iberia, the gold and copper mines of Brittany and Ireland, and the tin deposits of Cornwall, there was plenty of wealth to go around for those communities that faced the endless sapphire horizon. Between the 13th and 7th centuries BC, artifacts along the Atlantic coastline start becoming more homogenous. From Iberia to Ireland, the presence in the archaeological record of nearly identical looking ‘Carp’s Tongue Swords,’ concentric-patterned round shields, ritual war wagons, and large cooking cauldrons suggests the emergence of a culturally uniform social caste of warrior-elites whose way of life revolved around martial prowess and ritual feasting. Moreover, the fact that these artifacts are often found in the context of religious offerings thrown into lakes, rivers, and bogs indicates the emergence

of a shared belief system involving the appeasement of the Chthonic gods of the earth. Finally, it is likely that as this shared values system evolved, so too did a lingua franca: a common form of speech through which it was spread. Thus, as the theory goes, the culture and language that spread along the Atlantic coastline in the Late Bronze Age was the earliest form of the Celtic “package.” This would make the Celts of Britain not the westernmost extremity of a migratory expansion which began in the Alpine mountains but part of the original coastal heartland from where the culture originated. When exploring the ethnogenesis of Celtic Britain from a modern archaeological lens, there is an overall lesson to take away. Since the ancient Celts had no written records of their own, historians have traditionally been overwhelmingly reliant on the writings of Greek and Roman authors for literary accounts of their society. From that perspective, Britain was always at the edge of the world, a land of barbarians too far away from the centers of civilization to be relevant to anything or anyone. However, as we have now seen, this was hardly the case. For millennia before the Roman legions set foot on the island, Britain was a dynamic cultural hub and vibrant commercial entrepot with an influence that projected across thousands of miles. In the words of Barry Cunliffe, the Celts of Britain and their Bronze Age ancestors were “far from the distant, benighted periphery to the bright and beautiful Mediterranean, but part of a cohesive cultural zone capable of spectacular development built on home-grown innovation.” The 8th century BC marks the twilight of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. During this time, we can assume that the Celtic culture which had developed on the Atlantic coast began an eastwards march into inland France, Iberia, southern Germany, Austria, Bohemia, and other places the Celtic culture is known to have thrived in the immediate centuries before the rise of the Roman Empire. In these places, Celtic warrior elites came into contact with other wealthy, sophisticated societies, such as the Greeks via the colony of Massalia, the Etruscans of Northern Italy, and the nomadic Scythian horselords. The cultural influences of these foreign peoples, along with the fantastic wealth that establishing exchange networks with them brought, resulted in the development of a dynamic new Celtic ‘cultural package’ known today as the La Tene Culture. Developing in four separate tribal centers, principally along the Moselle and Marne rivers, La Tene soon expanded across much of Europe. Lasting from around 450 to 50 BC, the La Tene period is the most iconic era of ancient Celtic history. Its artwork is what the conventional mind considers quintessentially Celtic, featuring cauldrons, drinking vessels, weapons, shields, armour and jewellery characterized by stylistic spiral patterns. It was also during the La Tene apex that the Celtic world came crashing headlong into the Greco-Roman one. Indeed, it was during these centuries that ancient Celtic warbands sacked Rome, invaded the Balkans and Greece, settled in Anatolia, then got uno-reversed by Rome in a centuries-long staggered conquest which ultimately ended with Vercingetorix throwing his arms at Julius Caesar’s feet, and, more relevant to this story, Emperor Claudius pointing his legions across the channel to Britain: the last Celtic Frontier. But now we are getting ahead of ourselves. Before we launch into the arrival of the Imperial Eagle on Albion’s shores, let us first take a brief pause from the march of history and paint a picture of what society in iron age Britain, as part of the La Tene Cultural world, would have looked like immediately before the Roman Conquest. First, let us talk about the linguistic landscape. While there was likely once a single proto-Celtic language, by the late iron age, it had diverged into several related yet mutually unintelligible forms of speech. Throughout most of what is now England and Wales, a language called Common Brittonic was spoken. This tongue was probably mutually intelligible with the Gaulish language spoken across much

of continental Europe around the same time. Echoing across the rocky crags of the Scottish highlands was the Pictish language, a tongue so poorly attested to that historians debate whether it was a dialect of common Brittonic, its own distinct Celtic language, or even a non-Celtic language entirely. Finally, spoken in Ireland was the lilting prose of Gaelic. This language formed a separate branch of the Celtic language family, which Celtiberian, another divergent Celtic language spoken in Spain, was probably also part of. The linguistic diversity of iron-age Britain is still reflected in the Celtic languages of today, which are split into two branches, the descendants of Common Brittonic: Welsh, Cornish, and Breton, and the descendants of old Gaelic: Irish, Manx and Scottish Gaelic. Society in iron age Britain was highly decentralized and divided up into a patchwork of tribal territories. Generally speaking, the landscape was dominated by elevated hillforts, where a local chieftain and his cadre of warrior elites kept a watchful eye over the handful of surrounding farming communities. Indeed, while the Ancient Celts are often, somewhat rightfully, portrayed as an extremely bellicose people, it should be noted that after accounting for a Chieftain, his warrior aristocracy, and a small caste of specialized crafts and artisans, 90% of Celtic society consisted of unglamorous, yet economically crucial subsistence farmers. After all, everyone, mighty warlords included, needed to eat. Still, Celtic Briton society was no doubt a warlike one, with social prestige directly linked to feats of strength and victories won in combat. As such, fighting between communities, while probably mostly small in scale, was routine and ritualized. Warfare among the iron-age Britons was probably not conducted all that differently from how their Gaulish brothers on the continent went about it. All in all, facing these warbands across the battlefield was a horrifying experience. Both Roman and Greek records report on the terrifying nature of the Celts, claiming that before any engagement, they would roar and brag, performing ritualistic war dances while bellowing a deafening din out of their boar-headed war trumpets. All this may seem juvenile to the modern observer, but if one puts themselves in the shoes of a superstitious plebeian fresh off an ancient olive farm or the slums of Rome, one can appreciate the nigh supernatural terror that a mob of screaming, dancing, horn-blaring muscle-men must have had. One thing that set British warriors apart from their Gallic kinsmen during this era was their mastery of the war chariot. A sleek, two-wheeled horse-drawn vehicle, the Chariot had become a mainstay throughout the Celtic world during the early La Tene period, replacing the cumbersome four-wheeled ritual wagons which had served as symbols of power since the Bronze Age. However, by the time the continental Celts were duking it out with the Greco-Roman world, the chariot had fallen out of use as a battlefield unit in favour of mounted cavalry. Yet in Britain, it persisted as an instrument of war and would later confound the likes of Julius Caesar, whose legions had never encountered such vehicles until their foray into the foggy isle. Another aspect of Celtic Briton society that puzzled the strictly patriarchal Romans was the apparent normalization of women wielding positions of political or military power. Exactly how much political capital and social equality women had in both ancient Britain and the rest of the Celtic world is still a matter of debate among modern historians. However, the Roman writer Tacitus, in his book *Agricola*, remarked that ‘the Britons make no distinction of gender among their leaders.’ However, it should be noted that Tacitus made that remark to contextualize the story of a certain specific warrior Queen, whose story will absolutely be covered later in this documentary. Greek and Roman writings and sculptures have given us a romanticized image of the average Celt as a towering, red-maned noble savage sporting a manly mustache while painted head to toe in terrifying war paint. In reality, the average Ancient Briton would not have

been much taller than the average Roman or Greek. While fashion differed from region to region, iron-age Celts tended to dress conservatively in their day-to-day life. Men generally wore long-sleeved tunics and baggy trousers woven from flax and wool. Women tended to wear long dresses, while both sexes were often draped in cloaks decorated with colourful plaid patterns rendered from natural dyes of copper, berries, plants and stale urine. Personal grooming was highly important to the Celts. For example, both sexes were said to meticulously and painfully pluck all their body hairs. Additionally, there is some truth to the stereotypical depiction of the thick warrior's mustache, depicted often in both Celtic and Greco-Roman iconography, it was likely a common fashion among Celtic men and was believed to be a sign of manhood & virility. Celtic warriors were also said to have washed their hair in a mixture of slaked lime and water, which stiffened it into stiff white spikes. Jewellery was a common accessory among the upper classes. The brooch, a fastener for a cloak, was a remarkably enduring characteristic of Celtic fashion for centuries. Bracelets and arm rings were common, fashioned in the ornate swirling style characteristic of La Tene art. Celtic jewellery often had cultural or spiritual significance. The Torc, a weight metal neck-ring, was perhaps the most important ornament. Beyond its value as a symbol of status and rank, it bore a deep religious importance, said to bestow the protection of the Gods to whoever wore it. The Celts of Britain shared much of their physical characteristics with their Gaulish cousins on the continental mainland, but one thing unique to the islands was the practice of ritual tattoos. According to Roman accounts, the ancient Britons rendered a bluish dye from the *isatis tinctoria* flower called woad, which, when applied to their flesh, was said to provide magic protection in battle. Let us now touch upon the complex topic of religion. The Celtic Gods did not belong to an ordered pantheon like the Greco-Roman Olympians, and spirituality across the Celtic world was not uniform. Today we know of over 400 Celtic deities, most of which were the patron of a single tribe or a local god associated with a certain area. However, there were also Gods who were prominent across the Celtic world. These would include the thunder-wielding Taranis, Maponos the God of Youth, Belenus the Sun God, Cernunnos the Horned One, Epona the Horse goddess, and Toutatis, the war-like pan-Tribal protector. Ancient Celtic religion was a highly ritualized, deeply sophisticated belief system, which in many cases, was facilitated by a class of professional priests. It is here we come to perhaps the most iconically enigmatic aspect of Celtic society: The Druids. Today, the Druids conjure up a popular image of mysterious, long-bearded elders in white robes, harvesting mistletoe in ancient woodlands. However, far from being simple forest sages, Druids wielded massive political influence, often serving as peace-makers and diplomats on behalf of their chieftains, mediating legal matters, serving as healers, and heading education in their tribe. Training in order to become a druid involved an intense 20-year regimen in which a dedicant had to memorize a massive array of oral histories, religious lore, medicinal knowledge, astronomy, and of course, religious rituals and divination practices. Much of our knowledge about Druidic practices can be attributed to the writings of the man, the myth, the legend himself: Julius Caesar. According to him, the Druids hosted a pan-tribal meeting each year in the Forests of the Carnutes, a sacred ground in Northern France where major political or religious issues were settled between tribes. However, the center of Druidic studies, the Harvard of the Druidic world, so to speak, was located in Britain. Indeed, the sacred isle of Anglesey, located in what is now Northern Wales, would later be the stage of the violent climax of Rome's relations with the Druidic order. One of the key duties of a Druid was to officiate sacrifices to the Gods, sacrifices which often were of a human nature. Human sacrifice is a common taboo associated with

Ancient Celtic religion and is often described by Roman writers as a core part of Celtic practice. According to the Roman Author Lucan, different Gods called for different forms of ritual slaughter. Toutatis' victims were drowned in a vat of water, while Taranis' called for men to be beheaded or burned alive in giant effigies of straw. Human sacrifices often involved divination rites, the Greek historian Diodorus attested to a practice in which a victim was butchered so his entrails could be read to interpret the will of the Gods. It should be noted, however, that the Druids never wrote anything down and kept much of their knowledge a closely guarded secret restricted to members of their order. We will never have their own accounts of their religious rites, while the Roman authors who wrote about these practices had a vested interest in making their Celtic enemies look savage and barbarous. It would be revisionist to deny the existence of human sacrifice entirely, but we should also keep in mind the limited perspective that modern scholars have offered on the subject. Speaking of the Romans, their influence was felt on Britain long before a single legionary had ever planted his caligae on the beaches of Dover. Although the Briton's distant Gallic cousins in Northern Italy had once brought the Eternal City to its knees and then kept the young Republic confined to its native peninsula for well over a century, the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC had seen a reversal in fortunes as the dauntless maniples of the Latins pushed back the Italian Celts, breached the Alps, then emerged into the plains beyond, subjugating much of southwestern continental Gaul. With the benefit of hindsight, modern observers may see the slowly narrowing expanse between Rome and Britain as nothing more than the ominous foreshadowing of a conquest to come. However, for a time, the burgeoning Republic's increased proximity made the Chiefs of Britain exceptionally wealthy. Through a sophisticated network of tribal intermediaries along the Atlantic coastline, south-eastern Britain and Late Republican Rome were connected in a system of material exchange which enriched both worlds, with the Britons exporting metals, corn, hides and slaves in exchange for a slew of Mediterranean luxuries such as wine, figs, and exotic glass ornaments. However, as is often the case in history, sometimes all it takes to shake up a comfortable status quo is the ambitions of one man. Indeed, in the mid-1st century BC, a certain vociferous general, descended from Venus herself, crowdsurfed upon the white cliffs of Dover. Gaius Julius Caesar had arrived, and with him, the long saga of war between Roman and Briton had begun. The year was 55 BC, and Julius Caesar had been rampaging around northern Gaul for three years. What had begun as a particularly dramatic episode of border patrol against the migratory Helvetii tribe had evolved into a grand protracted military campaign to conquer the very heart of the Gallic World. The year 55 BC marked the one-year consulship of Crassus and Pompey, the two statesmen who, alongside Caesar, formed the illustrious First Triumvirate. By this point, Caesar's relationship with these two esteemed friends and colleagues of these was quickly developing into a rivalry, and with Crassus and Pompey now in a position of immense political power, Caesar needed political capital of his own, which he could only gain by doing something so bold that it would earn him enough prestige to stay in the public eye. To that end, he resolved to go with his legions where no Roman had gone before: across the tempestuous Atlantic Ocean and onto the lands that lay beyond. As previously mentioned, all Roman exposure to Britain thus far had been indirect. To the average legionnaire, Britain was the mysterious, foggy edge of the world, and it was even popular in some Roman scholarly circles to deny the island existed at all. Caesar, of course, knew better, for he had gathered a decent amount of second-hand information about the island from northern Gaulish notables, who had long maintained diplomatic ties with the Britons. Since 'I want more followers on my Twitch stream than

Crassus and Pompey' wasn't considered a valid reason to invade an entire country in the framework of Rome's legalistic approach to international relations, Caesar reasoned that his *casus belli* was to punish the Britons for supporting his enemies in mainland Gaul. In fairness, there may have been some truth to this. Back during the 2nd Century BC, Chieftains of the Gallic Belgae tribes migrated across the channel, establishing themselves as local rulers around what is now southeastern England. They introduced the practice of minting coins to the island, these coins weren't used as a form of standardized currency per se but rather as special political tokens which, when exchanged between two chieftains, tied them together in obligations of friendship and mutual aid. This indicates that cross-strait alliances between the tribes of Britain and Gaul were commonplace. In fact, according to Caesar, shortly before his time, a Belgic King, Diviciacus of the Sues-siones, commanded the fealty of tribes on both sides of the channel. After a brief detour across the Rhine river to massacre some Germans, Caesar prepared to make the journey across the wine-dark expanse. He questioned some Gallic sea merchants who regularly did business across the channel for intel about Britain, its people, customs, military tactics and good harbours to make landfall, but the merchants were tight-lipped, not wanting to give up valuable information which could hurt their bottom line. Ahead of his invasion, Caesar also sent Commius, one of his client Kings among the mainland Belgae, across the channel, hoping his prestigious Belgic lineage would aid him in convincing some of the British Chieftains to swear fealty to Rome. At midnight on August 23rd, Julius Caesar set forth from Portus Itius at the head of two legions, the VII and X, alongside a contingent of 500 cavalry. Immediately, there were problems. Summer weather conditions across the English Channel were fickle and hazardous. Due to contrary winds, eighteen of Caesar's transport ships, which just happened to be ones ferrying his cavalry, were blown back to the mainland. Nevertheless, by 9 AM the next morning, the remainder of the Roman fleet had spotted the horizon, and what a sight it was: a massive sheer cliff of pure white, rising straight from the ocean as if the sword of a God had cleaved down upon the coast. The White Cliffs of Dover are one of Britain's most iconic natural landmarks, but they make for an absolutely horrible place to disembark an invading army. Worse still, the Romans had been expected, for as their ships approached, they spotted a line of painted warriors staring down at them from the clifftop, howling and roaring, ready for battle. Rather than linger where the enemy could indefinitely lob missiles down at them from a sheltered high ground, Caesar ordered his fleet to sail northeastwards until the cliffs began to drop away. Eventually, the Romans came upon what modern archaeologists believe to be Pegwell Bay on Thanet Peninsula, where they once again encountered the British warband awaiting them on the sands, having been stalking their ships down the coast the entire time. This was a highly mobile force, comprised in large part of cavalrymen and, more notably, charioteers, a unit that Caesar's troops would have been unfamiliar with. The invaders resolved to disembark and confront their foes, but even here, it was a daunting task. Filled to the brim with armoured men, the transport ships were too low in the water to sail close to shore, meaning that the legionaries would have to disembark in deep water in heavy armour, hampering their mobility and perilously exposing them to missile fire. No man dared make the plunge until, according to Caesar's account, the standard-bearer of the Xth legion roared: "Leap, fellow soldiers, unless you wish to betray your eagle to the enemy. I, for my part, will perform my duty to the republic and to my general!" Properly chastised, the Romans began leaping overboard. The battle had begun. As the legionaries approached the shore, they were battered upon by a withering hail of missile fire, likely consisting of slings, arrows and javelins in equal

measure. However, the soldiers of the Republic pushed through this deadly downpour and, upon reaching shallow water, managed to form an orderly battle line. When they reached the beach, a wall of fearless, howling warriors crashed into this line, but the legionnaires held, Latin discipline measuring up to Celtic ferocity. Caesar calmly watched on from aboard a ship. Whenever he spotted a section of the line about to break, he deployed small platoons of shipboard reserves onto little rowboats, which ferried themselves onto the beach to shore up the crack. As British cavalrymen and charioteers attempted to outflank their enemy, they were pelted by catapultae: mounted artillery aboard the Roman vessels. Eventually, a signal was given, and the Britons withdrew. Composed mostly of mobile-mounted units, the Britons were able to peel off and disappear into the woods easily, while the Romans, composed only of heavy infantry, were unable to pursue. Still, the Romans had successfully established a beachhead and quickly erected a fortified camp. Night fell without further incident, and in the morning, ambassadors arrived from some of the local tribes. These dignitaries came in peace and brought with them a familiar face: Commius, Caesar's Gaulish client King. Apparently, Commius' attempts to sway the Britons into accepting Roman overlordship had not impressed them, for they had immediately arrested the Belgic ruler, but now, those same Britons had apparently changed their tune. They claimed that they had no affiliation with the angry rabble who had formed yesterday's 'welcoming committee' and offered Caesar valuable hostages to ensure their compliance. Caesar had only been in Britain for two days, but in that time, he had made a show of strength in the beach engagement and compelled at least some local notables to pay homage to him. So far, so good. However, the proconsul's fortunes immediately did a 180 in the following days. When the ships carrying Caesar's cavalry once again attempted to cross the channel, they were caught in a fierce storm and blown far off course. That same storm wrecked the transport ships anchored off the beach, sinking some and rendering others inoperable. In a foreign and unfamiliar land, with no mobile scouts and running low on food, Caesar was now stranded. This fact was not lost on the Britons. Realizing that if they could entrap him until the winter, they could starve him out, the natives renewed the attack. Caesar immediately set up routine foraging parties to gather both food and lumber to repair his ships. But his noose was tightening. One night, under the shroud of darkness, the British hostages slipped out of the Roman camp unnoticed. Not long after, a squadron of charioteers ambushed a Roman foraging party. Reinforcements from the camp drove off this attack, but a few days later, a massive army appeared from the treeline before the Roman stockade. Evidently, the natives had been hard at work forming a large tribal coalition to crush Caesar's ambitions for good. Yet, once again, the legionaries held the line. In this, they had unlikely aid from Commius, who had been able to scrounge up some local support after all, likely from the traditional enemies of the tribes who opposed Caesar. With an improvised force of native British cavalry supporting them, the Romans prevailed, and the hostile Briton horde was routed. Following this, the Romans were able to finish the makeshift repairs on their ships, which they hastily boarded and promptly returned to Gaul. Caesar's invasion of Britain had, quite frankly, been a failure, and he had been lucky to get away with his life. Of course, anyone remotely familiar with the man would know he was not exactly the 'leave good enough alone' type. So, he immediately began planning invasion two: electric boogaloo, and this time, there would be no half-measures. The invasion force that assembled at Portius Itius in the summer of 54 BC was over double the size of the one from the previous year, consisting of five full legions comprising up to 25,000 professional soldiers. They would be transported aboard an armada of 600 ships. These were not the leaky tubs

from the previous invasion, which had proven so vulnerable to the wrath of Taranis, the Celtic God of Thunderstorms. Instead, these new vessels had taken inspiration from the ships of the seagoing Gallic Veneti tribe, making them far more suitable for enduring the capricious channel winds. Accompanying him was a force of Gallic cavalry led by various local chieftains from Northern Gaul. By bringing these Gallic Kings along with him on the campaign, he reduced the risk of rebellion on the continent while he was away on the island and also sent a simple message to the Britons: ‘I have compelled your kinsmen across the sea to do as I command, and by Jupiter, I will do the same to you!’ The fleet cast off on the night of July the 6th, with Caesar leaving behind his subordinate, Labienus, at Portius Itius to manage a cross-channel supply chain so that, unlike last time, the Roman expedition in Britain could be regularly repositioned. The fleet came within sight of misty Albion the following morning. They landed likely where they had the previous year, at Pegwell Bay. This time, there was no native horde on the sands to greet them. Upon landfall, Caesar immediately established a fortified beachhead, then took the lion’s share of his forces and marched inland to find the enemy’s position. At a crossing along the River Stour, the legionaries discovered a large British force. A battle ensued, in which the Romans gained the upper hand, prompting the Britons to zip off on their speedy chariots. This time, Caesar had the cavalry to pursue, but the sun was falling, and the terrain was unfamiliar, so he decided to play it safe and make camp. The next morning, the proconsul received word that yet another storm had wreaked serious damage to his ships. The damage was not nearly as bad as it had been last year, but nevertheless, Caesar was forced to return to the beach and prioritize repairing his boats. Meanwhile, many tribes of Britain had put aside their differences and united around their mightiest warlord, a man named Cassivellaunus. Far more than just some barbarian brute, Cassivellaunus possessed a strategic mind that rivalled Caesar’s own. Realizing his lightly armoured Celtic warriors could not defeat Roman’s heavy infantry in a pitched battle, he pinned his hopes upon the 4,000 chariots under his command. After the Roman cavalry fended off some raids on his foraging parties, Caesar once again assembled the bulk of his forces and marched inland towards the river Thames. During this hellish advance, Cassivellaunus’ Fast & Furious street racers harassed the Roman column like a swarm of wasps. Using hit-and-run tactics, the charioteers swerved in close and hurled javelins at the invaders, then Tokyo drifted away the moment they were pursued, disappearing into the woods. The Roman cavalry did their best to swat away these attacks, but pursuing them was perilous. At one point, a contingent of Roman riders was lured deep into the forest and ambushed on all sides. However, just like last time, Caesar received a bit of a deus ex machina in the form of local support. Not every tribe in Southeastern Britain was super down with Cassivellaunus being in charge. The Trinovantes were particularly unhappy. Recently, Cassivellaunus had killed their King and forced his son, Mandubracius, into exile. Sometime before the invasion of Britain, Mandubracius had fled to Gaul, where he had become a ward of Caesar. Now, the Trinovantes approached the proconsul, offering him submission if their Prince was returned to them. Caesar happily complied, and soon after, five other tribes with grievances against Cassivellaunus: the Cenimagni, Segontiaci, Ancalites, Bibroci and Cassi, also came forth and supplicated themselves. Caesar’s new native allies gifted him with an invaluable piece of information: the location of Cassivellaunus’ hillfort, which was probably located at the modern site of Devil’s Dyke in Hertfordshire. Caesar beelined it to this stronghold, wanting to finally force his wily foe into the pitched engagement which had thus far alluded him. Knowing the storm was approaching his very doorstep, Cassivellaunus sent word to

his allies Cingotorix, Carvilius, Taximagulus and Segovax, the “Four Kings of Kent,” and instructed them to stage a diversionary attack on the Roman beachhead to force Caesar to divert his forces. Ultimately, this was a failed gambit, for the rump guard on the beach was able to repel the four Chieftain’s assault, and after a short encirclement and siege, Caesar was able to capture Cassivellaunus’ fortress, although apparently was not able to capture the warlord himself. Still, his warrior’s mustache heavily singed, Cassivellaunus decided to throw in the towel and enter negotiations with his Patricianly foe. The terms of surrender were fairly lenient. Cassivellaunus delivered valuable hostages into Caesar’s hands, agreed to pay an annual tribute to Rome, and promised not to seek revenge against the Trinovantes or any other tribes who had turned against him, which were now under Roman protection. Following this settlement, the proconsul departed with his armies. He had unfinished business in mainland Gaul and had to set forth before the peak of the stormy season. Ultimately, Gaius Julius Caesar’s invasion of Britain did not set up any permanent Roman presence on the island, although it did set a precedent of various chieftains in the southeast of Britain becoming autonomous client-Kings under Roman influence and protection. This status quo would endure for generations, but a century later, the Imperial Eagle would return to British Shores, and this time, it was there to stay. The year was 41 AD, and the Roman Empire had a new Princeps. Claudius was not the type of man one typically calls an Emperor. A shy and frail boy who struggled with a limp and a speech impediment, he had stumbled into the Imperial Purple only because he was too pathetic to be seen as a threat during the political purges committed by the Mad Emperor Caligula, and been the only member of the Imperial family left to take the throne after Caligula’s assassination. But he was no fool and knew that in order to win the support of his soldiers, he needed to shake off his craven reputation and engage in a grand conquest like his great dynastic ancestors Caesar and Augustus. For that, he chose the one corner of the Celtic world which had not yet been made fully subordinate to the Roman Empire. Recently, Caratacus, King of the Catuvellauni, had been making aggressive expansions of his own, conquering the Trinovantes’ tribal capital of Camulodunum and deposing Verica, the erstwhile King of the Atrebates. Both the Atrabates and Trinovantes were Roman clients, and Caratacus’ predecessor, Cassivellaunus, had agreed to respect the latter’s sovereignty in the treaty he had made with Caesar a century ago. Because of this, Claudius was hand gifted a valid *casus belli* for his invasion of Britain, with his expedition framed as a mission to protect Rome’s allies and punish Caratacus for violating the treaty signed by his forebear. In the year 43 AD, 98 years since Julius Caesar forayed into Britain for the first time, Roman troops began assembling in Gesoriacum in preparation to cross the channel. To lead this invasion, Claudius appointed Aulus Plautius, a distinguished senator and capable general. The force that gathered consisted of Legio XIV Gemina, Legio XX Valeria, Legio IX Hispana, commanded by one Gnaeus Hosidius Geta, and Legio II Augusta, which was notable for being commanded by Vespasian, the future Emperor of Rome. In addition to the regular legionaries, auxiliaries from the Empire’s conquered peoples were called upon. These were drawn principally from the Germanic Batavi tribe and the native tribes of Gaul, who were levied by their Imperial masters to participate in the subjugation of their British cousins. All told, the invasion force amounted to 45,000 light infantry, heavy infantry and cavalry, with half of that number consisting of Roman citizens and the other half consisting of Gaulish and Batavian auxiliaries. By Claudius’ time, Gaul had been thoroughly incorporated into the Roman Empire, but the Celtic tribes of Britain still held a mystic aura in Roman eyes. This was nothing new, of course, the Gauls of the continent had also once been seen

as supernatural demons, only to be thoroughly demystified through centuries of contact and conquest. But to the Romans of the 1st century AD, Britain was a land wreathed in the fog of mystery, full of untamed, long-haired savages streaked with haunting blue tattoos that gave them the mien of vengeful spirits. Of course, south-eastern Britain had been in the Roman sphere of influence ever since Caesar's hot girl summer in Kent a century earlier. But, to the average plebian legionary without higher education in contemporary geography and geopolitics, Britain was little more than a land of spirits and bogeymen. Thus, even before the invasion force set sail, Aulus Plautius was faced with a major mutiny on his hands. His men flatly refused to cross the ocean, which was considered to be the boundary of the proper world of mankind. According to the Roman historian Cassius Dio, this mutiny was nipped in the bud when Narcissus, an ex-slave in service of Emperor Claudius, mounted General Plautius' tribunal and began haranguing the soldiers for their cowardice. Either deeply humiliated or amused at being chastised by a former slave of all things, the legionaries erupted with shouts of 'Io Saturnalia!', a reference to the Roman festival where slaves became masters for a night, and resolved to follow Plautius across the sea. The aforementioned Cassius Dio, whose writings are incidentally the only ancient source that chronicles this invasion, does not state where Plautius' invasion force made landfall, but modern archaeologists confidently place the location at Richborough, Kent. Disembarking 45,000 men and all their horses, equipment, and provisions on a beach was a long and cumbersome process, which made it all the more peculiar that the Romans were able to do so unhindered. No native force had come to oppose the Roman landing. It is highly likely that a large Catuvellauni-led coalition army had been waiting on the beaches of Kent up until recently. But, after hearing about the mutiny of the Roman troops from cross-channel Gaulish traders, the threat of imminent invasion was greatly diminished, and most of the gathered tribes dispersed and returned to their farms. From Richborough, Plautius led his expedition westwards along the River Stour, where still he encountered no native resistance. However, this calm before the storm would not last. By now, the Catuvellauni and their allies were frenziedly rousing to arms. As soon as word of the Roman landing spread throughout the land, their massive, multi-tribal army began to reconstitute itself, led by King Caratacus and his brother, Togodumnus. Cassius Dio fails to name the location where this British force gathered, but the consensus of modern historians is that the two brothers chose to make their stand somewhere along the west bank of the River Medway. This dynamic duo of Catuvellauni royals likely commanded the fealty of nearly all the tribes of southern Britain and were capable of assembling a massive horde. However, it would take time for this pan-tribal force to filter in from outlying regions. As such, the brothers deployed a vanguard to delay the Roman advance. When Plautius attempted to ford the Stour river at a place near modern Canterbury, he finally encountered armed resistance from the warriors of the Cantaci. According to Cassius Dio, the Romans handily batted away this advance guard and secured its surrender. Around this time, another tribe, the Dobunni, approached Plautius with their emissaries and supplicated before the Imperial Eagle. Plautius left behind a small contingent of soldiers to build a fort near Canterbury and secure his initial land gains, then continued westwards, towards where the main indigenous host was gathering to oppose him. After crossing the Stour, the Roman army likely advanced in a broad column along a prehistoric trackway which had been maintained by the Britons and their ancestors since the stone age. Eventually, they arrived upon the east bank of the Medway River, likely at a shallow but marshy ford about four miles above present-day Rochester. There, the legionnaires and their auxiliaries came face to face

with the dragon they had come to slay: an absolutely massive throng of painted warriors staring them down from the opposite side of the water. Cassius Dio does not provide us with the numbers of Caratacus and Togodumnus' army, but historians have asserted that the Briton host may have numbered a staggering 150,000. Whether or not this number is exaggerated, the natives certainly outnumbered the invaders by a significant number. The four legions fanned out into a long battle line along the riverbank, and a tense stand-off ensued. The ball was in the Roman's court, for the Briton's main objective was simply to hold their position and the onus to advance was on the invaders. However, launching a full frontal assault across the water would be disastrous for the Latins, and both Plautius and the Catevellauni brothers knew it. According to Cassius Dio, the Britons were quite overconfident about their position, for they 'pitched their camp rather careless fashion,' not expecting the Romans to be able to cross the river. It is hard to believe that a pair of battle-hardened warlords like Caratacus and Togodumnus would be so naive to believe that some 500 yards of water would stop the Roman war machine dead in its tracks. But, if we take Cassius Dio's account of the supposed arrogance of the barbarians at face value, then their hubris would be their undoing. Plautius knew he needed to create a diversion before attempting to ford the river with his main army. To that end, he set up a ruse, ordering the legions to look busy and move about purposefully to convince the enemy that full-scale preparations were being made for an immediate assault. While the Britons watched all this with fascinated anticipation, Plautius deployed his Batavians to quietly enter the water some distance upstream and make a stealth crossing. Natives to the marshy lowlands of what is now Holland, the Batavians were experts in swimming across even the fastest of rivers in full arms and armour. The Germanic auxiliaries made it onto the British side of the Medway unnoticed. From there, they attacked not the dense mass of native warriors pressed on the bank but their chariots and tethered horses, which would have been parked in a cluster behind the horde and left relatively unguarded. The Batavians fell upon these war vehicles, smashing wheels and hamstringing the legs of the steeds which pulled them. When the British realized what had happened, they were likely thrown into a rage. The horse and chariot were a Briton's symbol of status and martial pride, and to have them so savagely vandalized would have undoubtedly thrown many a warrior elite into an apoplectic fury. As the Batavians withdrew back across the water, and a chaos-engulfed native horde gravitated its attention towards their maimed steeds, Plautius had finally achieved the diversion he needed. The dye cast, he commanded Vespasian to lead Legio II Augusta across the river. Carefully wading their way across the shallow marshes, the second Legion apparently managed to make it onto the opposite bank unnoticed. When the Britons realized they had been outmaneuvered, they threw themselves against the advance force. However, Vespasian held the line, his 5,000-some legionaries withstanding the tsunami of Celtic ferocity that crashed against their scutums. The Romans had successfully established a bridgehead on the British side of the river, with the Britons forced to pull back and regroup. As night fell, Plautius ordered Legio IX Hispania under Hosidius Geta to make the crossing under the cover of darkness and reinforce Vespasian. The next day, fighting began anew. Far from being routed, the Britons fell upon the Romans with renewed viciousness. Without any regard for their own lives, wave after wave of half-naked Celtic screamers threw themselves upon the bristling shield wall of their steel-clad foes. Evidently, the Britons initially had the upper hand and were able to create some perilous fissures within the Roman line. At one point, Cassius Dio notes that Legio IX was under serious threat of being swamped, with Hosidius Geta himself narrowly escaping capture. Evidently, it was Geta who turned the

tide. Instilled with a valorous second wind, the Legate of the Ninth rallied his men and turned the tide, probably successfully executing an encircling movement which ultimately put the British horde to flight. The Battle of the Medway ended in a decisive victory for the Romans. Although Caratacus and Togodumnus had both escaped the battlefield, the army they had assembled had likely sustained massive casualties, and their prospects in fielding a force large enough to face Plautius' four legions head-on again were grim. The Romans were now effectively the masters of lowland southern Britain. After the battle, Caratacus and Togodumnus fell back to the Thames with what remained of his army, the Romans in hot pursuit. According to Cassius Dio, the Britons crossed the water at a point where the river discharged into the ocean and formed a lake at flood tide. The brother-kings of the Catevellauni hoped to use this complex terrain to make another stand against the Imperial advance despite their diminished numbers. However, it seems that Plautius was able to either find a pre-existing bridge further upstream or have his soldiers construct a pontoon. Crossing with his legions while his Batavian stalkers swam across the water on a different stretch of the river, the invaders 'engaged the enemy from several sides at once, cutting many of them down.' This caused another British rout, but as the Romans pursued without due precaution, large groups of legionaries got lost in the marches where they were ambushed and cut down. During this battle, Togodumnus appears to have been killed. According to Cassius Dio, the Catevellauni King's death reinvigorated the fighting spirit of thoroughly battered Britons with a thirst for revenge. At this point, Caracatus had probably come to terms with the fact that he no longer had the manpower to face the Roman legions head-on. Bidding his anguished farewells to his kinsfolk in the eastern lowlands, who he was now forced to leave to the mercies of the Imperial Eagle, he and his followers retreated into the hilly highlands of Western Britain, where they intended to launch a stubborn, persistent and brutal guerilla war against the inevitable Roman advance. And yet, that advance did not occur. For now, Plautius refrained from marching into the hills, choosing instead to consolidate what was already in his possession. Despite having taken little to no part in the actual conquest, Emperor Claudius was anxious to bask in its glories. Thus, with the southeastern portion of the island cleared of all resistance, Plautius sent for his Augustus. The Imperial procession arrived in August with the Emperor, his Praetorian guard, and a contingent of war elephants. Shortly after his arrival, Claudius rode into the Catuvellauni capital of Camulodunum, which had been abandoned by Caracatus during his westward retreat. There, dignitaries from many local tribes approached to offer their submission. For most Britons, it would have been an imposing sight indeed, the Imperial Overlord cloaked in resplendent purple, mounted atop a massive gray monster in the capital where their defeated King once ruled. New times were upon them, and the land of Britain now had new masters. However, the Roman conquest of Britain had still only just begun, and it would take decades still for her legions to tame even the southern half of the island, let alone the wild, mountainous north. Par for the course in Celtic history, disunity hampered the British war effort. Some tribes with already Roman-leaning leaders, like the Iceni, submitted quickly, and were allowed to retain limited independence as client Kings under Roman rule. Even the resistance leader Caratacus himself was captured by Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes, who handed him to the Romans in chains. However, resistance continued in the northwest, spearheaded by the Silures and Ordovices tribes, who used guerrilla hit-and-run tactics to stymy the Imperial advance for over a decade. Still, the Roman war machine proved relentless, and by 60AD, was encroaching upon the island of Ynys Mon, one of the most important religious sites in Britain, and home to the islands'

Druidic order. Like their continental brothers, the Druids of Britain had been one of the primary driving forces of resistance against the Empire. When a Roman army led by Gaius Suetonius Paulinus arrived on the sacred isle, he came face to face with a line of chanting wizards clad in occult robes, standing behind wild priestesses wreathed in black, waving torches and screaming curses in the eerie Brythonic tongue. The extremely superstitious Legionaries stood paralyzed in utter terror at the magic of the druids. But Paulinus screamed courage into his men, and the Romans rallied, slaughtering all before them, and burning every sacred grove on the island to the ground. The scouring of the holiest site in Britain was meant to crush the native spirit, and yet the resistance continued, its torch passed on to an iconic warrior queen who needs no introduction. During the initial Roman invasion, the Iceni, a Brittonic tribe based in the east of the island, allied with the Romans as a means to secure protection. They paid tribute to the Empire, but were ruled by their own kings, who saw the way the wind was blowing. In the 60AD, the Iceni king Prasutagus died. In his will, the Roman Emperor Nero was made co-heir with the king's two daughters. Prasutagus did this in order to safeguard his kingdom and household and to ease them into Roman rule, but his attempts to play nice with the new overlords would be for naught, and end up bringing nothing but woe unto his next of kin. After the Iceni King's death, Roman legions marched to seize the tribes' entire territory. According to Tacitus, Prasutagus' 'kingdom and household alike were plundered like prizes of war', and Iceni lands were earmarked for annexation into the Roman province. This was a quintessential example of the underlying harsh and oppressive conditions of the Roman occupation of Britain. We only have Roman accounts of the period, but even these are enough to reveal terrible misadministration ranging from cruelly negligent to downright criminal. It is possible that the procurator of Britannia would have been under constant pressure to improve his cash flow, and the temptation of Iceni riches was too much to pass up on. In addition, the forced levy of young adolescent warriors into the Roman legions as auxilia was almost universally detested. Whatever the reasoning, when the king's widow, Queen Boudicca, protested against this treatment, she was flogged, and her daughters were abused by Roman soldiers. Furious at this humiliation and wishing to force the Romans off their lands, in the year 60 CE, Boudicca raised her people to war. In gathering an alliance to oppose the Imperial occupiers, the Iceni were quickly joined by their southern neighbors - the Trinovantes. The 'British disaster, as Suetonius called it, had began. The revolt occurred at a particularly bad time for the Romans, because the governor of Britannia as the time, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, was away in northern Wales, culling an island of Druids, and could not quickly return. Before long, the Iceni and their allies were marching south to the Roman military colonia of Camulodunum, modern day Colchester. This town served as one of the main symbols of Roman domination in Britain, and a constant sting to the pride of the Celtic warrior. Presently, it was almost entirely undefended, for its garrison, the Twentieth Legion, had gone west with Paulinus. To make matters worse, while Camulodunum was full of Roman administrative and cultural buildings, it had little in the way of military fortifications, without so much as walls to hide behind. When the hated colonia received word of the incoming storm, they pleaded with the procurator in Londinium, Catus Decianus, for help. Rather than marching to the aid of his countrymen, the procurator sent them a meagre 200 strong force of poorly equipped slaves. It is entirely possible that Decianus completely underestimated the scale of the revolt. A 2,000 strong segment of the IX legion hastily rushed to the rescue of the colony. However, in their haste they were ambushed by Boudicca's Iceni forces and almost totally destroyed. Without any substantial relief arriving in time, the Britons bore down

on the city. Men, women and children were wiped out by hanging, crucifixion, burning and other cruel means, while the colony's buildings were burned to the ground. Survivors of this first wave fled to the great temple of Claudius for protection, and were shielded for two whole days by the veteran Romans and the small number of reinforcements sent to the town. Despite their resistance, the Celtic numbers paid off and they burst into the temple, killing everyone they saw. The destruction of Camulodunum was so total that archaeologists are able to see a noticeable layer of scorched debris left by the sacking of the city called the 'Boudiccan destruction horizon'. In the aftermath, a messenger reached Paulinus in Wales, informing him of the disaster and prompting him to force march his troops back to the east, while he rode swiftly with a group of horsemen to appraise the situation. Londinium was the rebels' next major target. This Roman city, founded just after the conquests of 43AD, had in the decades since Claudius' initial invasion grown into a bustling trade centre populated by merchants, travellers, Roman functionaries and their families. Before Boudicca's horde of Brittonic warriors could arrive in Londinium, Paulinus arrived with his small mounted contingent and contemplated making a stand to save the town. However, he quickly realised that without his legions, it was a foolish fight to get into. He instead decided to abandon Londinium to its fate in order to buy time for his armies to concentrate, and retreated northwest along the road which would become known as Watling Street. Soon after Paulinus' retreat, the same devastation which had scoured Camulodunum now hit Londinium. The death and destruction was absolute. After slaughtering the population of Londinium, Boudicca set off in the direction of Verulamium, moving north up Watling street before doing what she had done to the two other larger cities. The lack of coins in the archaeological record however, could imply that the inhabitants realised what was coming and managed to escape with much of their portable wealth - possibly following Paulinus north. Nevertheless, Verulamium also ended up a blackened wasteland. Meanwhile, Paulinus had united with the forces he could muster, and picked a spot for the coming decisive battle about half-way up Watling street, attempting to draw Boudicca as far west as possible to allow time for the legionaries to rest. The field on which the climactic battle would be fought was a spot surrounded by wooden slopes with a narrow entrance, and protected in the rear by a primitive forest dense with undergrowth. A traditional Roman tactic of using terrain to his advantage, Paulinus knew that in this position, the Romans could not easily be assailed from the flanks or rear. Where exactly in middle-England the battle took place is still a matter of debate, and many locations have been put forward including the town of Mancetter, but it could have been any number of places. Wherever the eventual conflict took place, Paulinus had around 11,000 soldiers at his disposal, consisting of roughly 7,000 highly-disciplined legionary heavy infantry, drawn from legio XIV Gemina and a vexillatio - or a temporarily detached segment of legio XX. The 4,000 additional troops were six cohorts of auxilia infantry and two alae of cavalry, including the consistently fearsome Batavians from the Rhine region. Paulinus had attempted to reinforce his numbers by calling legio II Augusta from the south, but its commander ignored the request. Forming up in front of their defensive position was, according to Cassius Dio, a horde of 230,000 Celtic screamers. These numbers are highly questionable, but even if we divide the supposed Celtic horde by five, the Romans were still outnumbered around five to one. The majority of the rebel infantry was armed in the traditional manner of the La Tene Celtic warrior, girded with a combination of long slashing swords, shields and short thrusting spears. As for armour, it was very rare, and Celtic warriors probably went into the fray dressed only in a pair of loose woolen trousers. They instead relied on their fearsome physique

and individual skill in fighting to gain victory. Celtic aristocrats and military elites also formed a small force of open-fronted, lightning fast and nimble chariots. As the rebel force approached Paulinus' ragtag, half-strength contingent, he arrayed his forces along a narrow defile, with his legionaries serving as the core strength of his army in the centre, three auxilia cohorts on each of their flanks and an alae of cavalry on each wing, anchored by the forests. The dense forest cover at the sides and behind also meant retreat would be impossible if the Romans were defeated, it was to be all or nothing battle. As the opposing forces readied themselves for the fray, both commanders attempted to motivate their men. Riding the royal chariot along with her two daughters, the queen is reported, by the probably inventful Cassius Dio, to have driven through her loose ranks, shouting to the warriors around her: "We British are used to women commanders in war", 'I am descended from mighty men! But I am not fighting for my kingdom and wealth now. I am fighting as an ordinary person for my lost freedom, my bruised body, and my outraged daughters....Consider how many of you are fighting—and why! Then you will win this battle, or perish. That is what I, a woman, plan to do!—let the men live in slavery if they will.' The comments made on the other side of the battlefield were far more brisk and businesslike, brushing off the apparent 'riff-raff' opposite them. "Ignore the racket made by these savages!" Paulinus orated to the troops. "They are not soldiers. They are not even properly equipped! We have beaten them before and when they see our weapons and feel our spirit, they WILL crack." With a clamorous din of war cries from both sides, the British charioteers opened the battle, wheeling up and down the Roman line, throwing insults and deadly javelins at the Romans in equal measure. The Romans managed to resist this missile onslaught, and before long, the charioteers retreated as the warbands surged forward. They came in a gargantuan head-on assault, hoping to use the shock factor of their charge to crash through and break apart the Roman line. However, Romans' clever use of terrain now came into effect. As the numerically dominant Celtic horde charged up the slope, it was naturally funnelled into the increasingly narrow defile, which acted as a force multiplier - limiting the number of warriors which could engage the Romans at any one time, and blunting their charge, due to its uphill nature. Nevertheless, the screaming warriors charged forward and, just before they hit the Roman line, were showered by a storm of legionary Pila javelins, which would have caused crippling casualties in lightly armed troops. Then, the Roman formation charged downhill in a series of offensive wedge formations, aiming to carve deep swathes into the enemy mass. The legionaries smashed their enemy in the face with the metal centre of their heavy scutum shield, and then thrust with the gladius. With the impetus of their initial shock charge blunted by the terrain, sophisticated tactics and brutal efficiency of the enemy, the battle turned. Boudicca's light infantry, who probably had little experience fighting the kind of heavily armoured and armed troops Rome fielded, were progressively, slowly but certainly carved into during the course of the day. British vigor and ferocity were pushed back by Roman endurance and discipline, closer and closer to the semicircle of wagons behind them. Catastrophically, women, children and the infirm had accompanied the men to this battle. However, the wagons inadvertently served as a large net through which the Celts could not escape quickly enough, and they were massacred. Despite fighting for their own lives and those of their lives ones, the Romans had no mercy. The women, child and even draught animals were slain by the Roman gladius. We do not know how many perished, but 80,000 Britons were said to have died on the battlefield, at the meagre cost of 400 Romans. Though Boudicca managed to escape on her chariot, Tacitus tells us that took her own life a few days later, while Cassius Dio says that ill-

ness claimed her. Poenius Postumus, the legio II commander who had refused to assist Paulinus, committed suicide when he heard news of the victory - clearly aware of the fate that awaited him for his insubordination. The legion itself was disgraced, and remained II Augusta for the rest of its days. Conversely, legio XIV Gemina gained the titles Martia Victrix - Martial and Victorious, while legio XX gained the title Valeria Victrix - Valiant and Victorious. The rest of the Iceni and Trinovantes were utterly annihilated by the punitive Paulinus. After this defeat, Britannia would increasingly be solidified as a Roman province. Sporadic warfare continued for another twenty years, but by 80AD, Britain had been subdued. ...Or had it? Over centuries of Imperial occupation, formerly Celtic territories like Hispania and Gallia Transalpina had all become core domains of the Roman Empire. Roads, aqueducts, and grand cities increasingly connected these outlying territories to the Italian heartland. The Gallic language survived among the peasantry for a time, but the local nobles, subjected to centuries of Latin education, had become thoroughly Romanized in every meaningful way. Britain was different. As the Empires' furthest frontier territory, the Brythonic Celts never embraced the Roman identity as much as their cousins on the continent had. Of course, some did. The south and eastern edges saw substantial infrastructure spending that led to the development of Roman roads, villas, and cities like Londinium and Eboracum. The local elites here soon got with the program, embracing the Latin language as well as the trappings of Roman material culture. But this civilization existed on a gradient. If a man left the paved streets of Londinium and traveled north or west, the landscape would change. He would begin to see fewer castras and villas, and more wattle roundhouses in the environs of iron-age hillforts. The regions of what is now most of Northern England and Wales had been where anti-Roman resistance had been strongest, and though the natives here had no doubt been conquered, they never truly embraced the Roman way of life like their south-eastern kinsmen had. It was here that classical Celtic staples like La Tene artwork and the tribal lifestyle survived. For nearly the entirety of Imperial rule, these regions had to be kept under strict military occupation. But for all their independent spirit, these were not the last free Celts. If one headed further north, they would find themselves standing before a massive whitewashed wall that stretched from horizon to horizon. A massive structure which, at least in Roman eyes, marked the border where civilization ended, and untamed savagery began. Since the iron age, the northern half of the island of Britain, corresponding to modern Scotland and the northern extremity of modern England, had been home to many tribes. Perhaps the most powerful of these were the Caledoni, who lived in the highlands of modern Scotland. Their name was a proto-Celtic portmanteau meaning 'those with hard feet', probably a reference to the rugged territory they inhabited. In later centuries, the Romans called them Picti- Latin for painted ones. In these wild northern hills, amidst torrential rivers and rolling plains on the edge of the world, lay the final frontier of Celtic independence. The roots of Rome's first campaigns into the northern half of Britain in 69 AD. After a year of civil war, one man had eliminated all of his rivals and claimed sole dominion of the Imperial Purple. That man was none other than Vespasian, the general who, in his youth, had been the hammer that broke the Britons at the Battle of the Medway. Vespasian's days of campaigning on the edge of the world were over, but his ambitions to fully tame perfidious Albion were not. In 71 AD, he appointed one of his most trusted supporters, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, to command Legio XX Valeria Victrix and bring order to the defiant Brigantes, who had thrown off their pro-Roman Queen Cartimandua and launched an open revolt against Imperial overlordship. Evidently, Agricola was successful because six years later, in 77

AD, Vespasian made him the governor of the entire province and equipped him with four legions to govern it. At this time, Britannia was one of the most heavily garrisoned parts of the Roman Empire, and for good reason. At 37 years old, Agricola inherited a province which was barely tamed. Boudicca's rebellion was still in recent living memory, and even now, there were sparks of insurrection in Wales and northwestern England which had yet to be put out. Agricola's goals for his tenure as Governor were simple: enforce Romanitas upon the conquered tribes of Britain, and expand the frontiers of the Empire to the hitherto unconquered tribes of the unexplored northern half of the Island. Before we launch into Governor Agricola's epic faceoff against the howling Scots, we must first be responsible historians and discuss the primary source which chronicles his invasion. Almost everything we know about Agricola's campaigns against the Caledonians comes from a biography fittingly known as *The Agricola*, written by the Roman historian Tacitus, who happened to be Agricola's son-in-law. So, not only are we dealing with our usual issue of viewing ancient Celtic history through an exclusively Roman lens, but we are also contending with the fact that our main primary source was written by a man with a nepotistic interest in glorifying his main character. As such, many modern historians are very critical of Tacitus. However, it's not really in our wheelhouse to put a 2,000-year-old proto-ethnographer on trial, so we will simply depict his interpretation of events as is. When Agricola was a little boy, his mother always told him: 'Son, no Scotland for you until you finish your Wales.' Taking that wisdom to heart, he spent the campaigning season of 78 AD grinding down the stubbornly defiant Ordovices. Making good use of the mobile and amphibious Batavian auxiliaries who had previously played a critical role in the initial conquest of Britain, Agricola crushed the Ordovices in battle. Continuing where Gaius Suetonius "Kentucky fried Druid" Paulinus had left off two decades earlier, he proceeded to fully subjugate the sacred isle of Anglesey. That winter, Agricola went on an infrastructure spending spree throughout the territory of the conquered tribes, building temples, courts of justice and Roman villas for the tribal elites who obediently adopted the Roman way of life. By this time, much of Southeastern Britain was well on its way to Romanization, as Celtic nobles whose mothers and fathers had fought tooth and nail against Roman expansion developed a liking for the toga, the lounge, the bath, and the elegant banquet. Interestingly enough, Tacitus is somewhat cynical about this, remarking: "All this in their ignorance they called civilization when it was but a part of their servitude." Despite having a clear admiration of his father-in-law's military victories, Tacitus was critical of the more hedonistic, luxury-loving elements of Roman society and conveyed a begrudging respect for what he saw as the 'untamed barbarian,' whose life, in his imagination, was brutal, yet more honest than the Roman one. Tacitus' fondness for the 'noble savage' trope will become evident in how he depicted the unconquered Caledonians whose territory his father-in-law was soon to encroach upon. With the south pacified, in the summer campaigning season of 79 AD, Governor Agricola launched his first foray into the unknown and untamed lands beyond Imperial control. Tacitus doesn't provide the makeup of his father-in-law's forces, but it is likely they consisted of the Ninth and Twentieth Legions, based out of Carlisle and York, respectively, with a contingent of Batavian and Gallic auxiliaries attached. The Roman expedition advanced along two prongs, with Legio XX Valeria Victrix taking the western route to Galloway and Legio IX Hispania marching along the eastern coast. Surprisingly, the invaders encountered very little resistance from the locals, with the Novantae, Solgovae, and Votadini tribes submitting quickly. Tacitus claims that despite the legions being "battered by summer storms," the natives were "so petrified with fear that they did not dare attack." It is easy

to understand why. The threat of the Roman army was not just the invincible image of its heavy infantry but its monstrous logistical prowess. As Agricola advanced, he oversaw the construction of a network of forts and roads to consolidate his gains, maintain a reliable supply line, and pave the way for future campaigns. Put yourself in the eyes of a lowland Scot in this era, and one can understand why many decided it was ill-advised to bare arms against an invader which not only outclassed them in arms and manpower but was capable of levelling hills and clearing forests within days and erecting fortresses within the span of single evenings. It is estimated that, throughout all his northern campaigns, Agricola had over 35 permanent wooden fortresses built across Scotland. After spending the winter of 79 in their well-provisioned forts, the spring of 80 AD saw Agricola's legions advance onto the Firth of Tay, and reduce the Venicones tribe to submission, extending his network of roads and castra into their territory. The Governor's conquest of Scotland was accomplished very slowly, hill by hill, but by maintaining this glacial pace, he ensured his gains were stable and logically sustainable. By 81 AD, the Forth-Clyde Isthmus had been fully absorbed into the Roman frontier, with a line of forts running across its southern coast. These forts were regularly reprovisioned by the Roman navy, which now operated along regular supply routes along the coast. That same year, Tacitus mysteriously remarks that Agricola embarked on a ship and defeated peoples unknown to the Romans until then. This may just mean that he crossed to the other side of the Firth of Clyde, but traditionally, it has been popularly theorized that the body of water Tacitus mentions Agricola crossing was the Irish Sea. This is supported by the fact that, according to Tacitus, at some point, a regional Irish King had been exiled from his homeland and crossed the sea, where he came under Agricola's protection. We can imagine the Roman governor entertaining the thought of using this exiled Gaelic chieftain as a pretext to launch an invasion of Ireland. Irish folk legend tantalizingly waters the seeds that Tacitus plants. Tuathal Teachtmhar, a legendary Gaelic King, is said to have been exiled to Britain as a boy and to have returned to Ireland at the head of an army to claim the throne. The traditional date of his return is between 76 and 80, and archaeology has found Roman or Romano-British artifacts in several sites associated with Tuathal. Whether or not Agricola dipped his toes into the land of the Gaels, by 81 AD, he had definitely achieved a firm hold over the lowlands of Scotland, making the jagged peaks and valleys of the misty highlands the only part of Britain whose soil was unmarred by the footprint of the legionary's caligae. Here, the roaring Caledones tribe and their vassals dwelt, and here, Agricola would finally come face to face with the Pictish ferocity that future generations of Romans would learn to fear. As the campaigning season of 84 AD commenced, the intrepid governor resumed his northward creep, advancing up along the highland boundary fault, where the gentle hills and steep crags of Alba's two geological zones meet. Ahead of his army, he deployed the Roman fleet up the east coast to spread fear and confusion along the coastal settlements. Yet, unlike their lowland cousins, the woad-streaked Caledonians were uncowed by the advance of the indomitable Imperial war machine. Under their leadership, a large confederation began to form, consisting of nearly all the tribes of the highlands, as well as contingents of lowland warriors who were not content to bow down before Agricola as their chieftains had. Deep in the mountains, a massive army gathered to oppose the Roman advance. This army was led by a man named Calgacus, who Tacitus describes as a peerless warrior-king, "most distinguished in birth and valour" among all the Scottish Chieftains. Calgacus, whose name means 'swordsman,' is Tacitus' ideal noble savage: a man who would die to preserve a brutalistic but free life rather than accept servitude amidst the creature comforts of Latin

civilization. The climactic clash between Calgacus and Agricola occurred on a hill named Mons Graupius. Modern historians don't know where this hill was located, other than that it could have been anywhere north of the River Tay. Wherever it was, it was there that Calgacus led his massive host, and there he intended to make his stand against the Romans. Agricola's army happened to be encamped nearby, and when the location of the Caledonian army was revealed to Agricola, he double-timed it over, bivouacking his army at the base of the slopes. A stare-down ensued, with the Romans at the bottom of the hill and the Scots at the top. Evidently, Calgacus was quite the charismatic orator, for before the battle commenced, Tacitus attributes to him a stirring speech: "To us who dwell on the uttermost confines of the earth and of freedom, this remote sanctuary of Britain's glory has up to this time been a defence. Now, however, the furthest limits of Britain are thrown open. But there are no tribes beyond us, nothing indeed but waves and rocks, and the yet more terrible Romans, from whose oppression escape is vainly sought by obedience and submission. Robbers of the world, having by their universal plunder exhausted the land, they rifle the deep. If the enemy be rich, they are rapacious; if he be poor, they lust for dominion; neither the East nor the West has been able to satisfy them. Alone among men they covet with equal eagerness poverty and riches. To robbery, slaughter, plunder, they give the lying name of empire; they make a solitude and call it peace." Not to be outdone, Agricola turned to face the men who had followed him to the very ends of the earth and delivered a rousing address of his own: "Often on the march, when morasses, mountains, and rivers were wearing out your strength, did I hear our bravest men exclaim, 'When shall we have the enemy before us? – when shall we fight?' He is now here, driven from his lair, and your wishes and your valour have free scope, and everything favours the conqueror, everything is adverse to the vanquished. Better is an honourable death than a life of shame, and it would be no inglorious end to perish on the extreme confines of earth and of nature!" With courageous cheers on both sides, Roman and Scotsmen alike began forming battle lines. The Caledonian Confederacy likely numbered around 30,000 strong. Calgacus organized his massed infantry into two lines, one on the lower slopes of the hill and one in reserve at the peak. On the flat plain at the base of the hill between the two armies, he positioned his charioteers, who ran their paces back and forth along the battle line, hurling insults and fearless braggadocio toward their enemies. With an army of perhaps 12,000 men total, Agricola was deeply outnumbered. His forces consisted of three proper legions, ten wings of auxiliary cavalry, and eight cohorts of auxiliary light infantry, who were made up of non-citizens from the Germanic Batavi and Gaulish Tungri tribes. Agricola kept the legions and four wings of cavalry in reserve, with their backs to the makeshift camp where they had spent the previous night. On the front line, he positioned his Germanic and Gallic auxiliaries, with his remaining cavalry units supporting them on the flanks. The battle began with both sides hurling their javelins and throwing spears at one another. The Caledones stood indomitable against this withering hail, deflecting the oncoming missiles with their short shields or ducking away. After this opening salvo, Agricola ordered his auxiliaries to advance. The Batavian and Gallic infantry moved forth to engage the Scots while the governor's frontline cavalry thundered ahead, tying up the opposition's charioteers. The main battle lines clashed with the clamorous din of iron on steel. Although neither side lacked in bravery or ferocity, Tacitus claims it was a discrepancy in equipment which was the deciding factor. In this tightly packed contest, with men pushed up against one another like sardines, the short-stabbing swords used by the Batavians and Gauls were far more effective than the long-slashing swords used by the Caledones. Slowly,

the Roman auxiliaries began gaining ground on their Scottish foes, pushing them up the hill. Soon, the front-line auxiliary cavalry, having chased off the charioteers, joined in the struggle. However, fighting as they were on a slope, the tactical advantage of their mounted mobility was nullified, and they were assimilated into the bloody meat grinder. Seeing their comrades being pushed back, the Britons farther up the hill, who had until then taken no part in the action, now began gradually to move down the slope in an attempt to outflank the advance, wheel around, and attack from behind. Agricola, who had anticipated this manoeuvre, called up the four cavalry wings that he had kept back in case of emergency to pull an uno-reverse and outflank this outflanking attempt. So furiously did the reserve cavalry charge against the oncoming opposition that what was intended as a push forward disintegrated into a rout. Fully encircled, the Caledone's lines broke. Carnage was the order of the day, as Mount Graupius was dyed red with the Highlander blood. As for Calgacus, his fate is ultimately unknown. Funnily enough, Agricola had achieved his military magnum opus without losing a single Roman citizen. The legions had no active fighting during the battle, and once again, it was the Batavians who provided the hard carry in Rome's prolonged quest for dominance over all of Britain. Modern historians cast a thick shroud of skepticism over pretty much every aspect of the battle of Mons Graupius, claiming that Calgacus' speech, Calgacus himself, and the battle as a whole are products of Tacitus' overactive imagination, inventions the historian came up with to create a compelling story that glorified his father-in-law. Still, if events did transpire as Tacitus claims they did, then after Mons Graupius, the Roman Empire could truly claim to be the sole master of all of Britain, from its very southern tip to its most northern extremity. However, this mastery would prove to be incredibly fleeting. By 85 AD, Vespasian was dead, and Domitian was now cloaked in the Imperial Purple. The new Emperor's relationship with Agricola was noticeably chillier than his predecessor. Tacitus claims that Domitian, whose campaigning in Germany had yielded minor, modest victories at best, was jealous of Agricola's grand military triumphs. This is a little hard to take at face value since, as previously mentioned, Tacitus is hardly unbiased. Still, for whatever reason, a year after his triumph at Mons Graupius, Gnaeus Julius Agricola was recalled from Britain and never again held a civil or military post. Pretty much immediately after his departure, all his land gains dissolved away like so many grains of sand. Over on the Danube frontier, Rome was engaged in a long and taxing war against the Decebalus, the King of Dacia, while also dealing with the emergent threat of the Germanic Marcomanni, Quaci and Suebi confederations. To address the dire need for additional manpower on that front, Legio II Adiutrix was recalled from Britain back to the continent. With one of its four legions gone, a total of 25% of its total occupying manpower, the Roman authorities in Britain no longer had the ability to hold on to their gains in the north. By the end of the 1st century AD, all the forts built during Agricola's tenure had been abandoned and destroyed. Over the next few decades, the Caledones and their client tribes increasingly became a persistent thorn in the side of the Romano-British regime, as fierce warbands regularly roved south into occupied territory, plundering the countryside, seizing imported Mediterranean treasures and valuable captives and dragging them back to their inaccessible highland hillforts. Agricola may have singed their moustaches at Mons Graupius, but by no means had the tribes of the north been tamed. In fact, they had become a force that regularly imperilled Roman security yet was too remote for the overstretched Empire to fully subdue. In 122, Emperor Hadrian, a man whose geopolitical philosophy for the Empire revolved around limes, or 'boundaries,' brought the situation in the north of Britain to its logical

conclusion. A conclusion that even today can be observed by modern hikers exploring the trails of Cumbria and Northumberland. 135 kilometres long and extending from coast to coast, historians have long debated the true reasons behind the monumental feat of engineering that was the construction of Hadrian's Wall. Perhaps its sole purpose was to stymie Pictish raids into Roman territory, perhaps it also served as an ancient parallel to the Berlin Wall, a barrier which prevented the conquered tribes of Britain from colluding with their unconquered brethren further north. Perhaps it was an 84-mile-long propaganda statement meant to deter the barbarians beyond from any funny business through sheer shock and awe. Whatever the case, Hadrian's wall was a premonition. Although future Roman Emperors would attempt to pick up where Agricola left off, never would the Imperial Eagle manage to secure any kind of long-term control over the wild and untamed north of Britain. The Caledonians were not unconquerable, and Rome probably could have brought them to heel with enough time, effort, and blood. However, the far north of Britain was too far away from the Imperial heartland to rule effectively. Claudius had been pushing it by conquering southern Britain, large parts of which, as we covered earlier, remained loosely controlled at best. In the case of the Picts, it was better to just build a giant wall to keep them out of the civilized world entirely. That is not to say that future Emperors didn't try to conquer the north anyway. For centuries, the painted warriors beyond the wall were a thorn in the Empires' side. As it turns out, Hadrian's wall only slowed them down, rather than stopping them entirely. Raids remained a constant problem, and the Picts sometimes aided tribes south of the wall in their constant rebellions. During the reign of Antoninus Pius, the Romans responded to this by invading Pictish territory once more, and erecting the Antonine wall. But this was abandoned a decade later, and the Romans fell back to Hadrian's old frontier. In 210AD, Emperor Septimius Severus tried his hand at taming the Picts, resulting in a brutal campaign in which his highland foes played a frustrating game of guerilla warfare. Here, Roman writer Cassius Dio claims they inflicted 50,000 Roman deaths through attrition alone. Severus later died of illness in Eboracum, and his son Caracalla forged a peace with the natives, forcing the Romans to once more retreat to Hadrians' line. The Picts were not the only Celts of late antiquity to be free of Roman rule. It is now we take a brief detour to Ireland, home to a subculture of the Celts known as the Gaels. The Gaels have so far assumed a background role in our video, isolated as they were on their remote island, far away from the concerns of classical Greco-Roman writers. Generally speaking, the Romans showed little interest in the Gaelic homeland, which they called Hibernia. Although, when Agricola was invading the Caledonians, he also made preparations to launch an invasion across the Irish sea, but those probably never materialized. Like northern Britain, Ireland was too remote to be worth conquering. Being a land of wild forests, deadly bogs, and belligerent war-like tribesmen, it wasn't exactly prime real estate anyway. With that said, the island was not entirely isolated from the ancient world. It was a common destination for Brittonic tribes fleeing Roman rule, and the discovery of Roman artifacts in the area has led modern archaeologists to believe that regular trade probably occurred across the Irish sea. The Gaels could also be quite pestiferous, one of their tribes, the Scotti, were basically sea pirates that regularly raided the western coast of Britain. And yet, despite some trade links and a sprinkle of maritime war crimes, the Irish Gaels would not take center stage in the history of the Celts until after the departure of the Romans from Britain. After the abandoning of the Antonine wall, the era of Roman land conquests in Britain had come to an end. From then on, the borders of the Imperial Province of Britannia would go more or less unchanged until the

final departure of the Legions in 410 AD. Thus, we will now temporarily move away from our broad narrative of war and geopolitics and take a more intimate look at what daily life looked like for the Celtic Britons living under Imperial rule. By 150 AD, large swaths of land in Britain had been reshaped in the ideal of Romanitas. Under Imperial auspices, the island achieved a level of urbanization hitherto unheard of. Population centers such as Camulodunum, Eboracum, and of course, Londinium offered all the amenities one would expect from a Roman city. In these bustling entrepots, townsfolk enjoyed clean water brought in from the local aqueducts and advanced sewage systems. Austere temples served the people's spiritual needs, public baths kept them vitalized, while forums and basilicas served as the epicentre of public life. Along gridded streets, the wealthiest of urbanites lived in townhouses decorated with frescoes, mosaics, and courtyard gardens. Beyond city walls, a 3,200-kilometre system of paved roads served as the arteries which joined Britannia's cities to its bread basket. For aristocratic elites, life in the hinterlands was just as comfortable as in the towns. Throughout the countryside, especially in the domesticated southeast, wealthy landowners lorded over large swaths of fertile farmland in Latin-style villas which ranged from modest farmsteads to huge palatial estates that transplanted the sun-kissed grandeur of the Mediterranean into the idyllic rolling hills of the English countryside. Many of these villas were equipped with the same comforts and conveniences as urban homes, such as an advanced system of central heating. Like elsewhere in the Empire, Roman Britain was no stranger to spectacle. In amphitheatres outside towns across the province, rabid crowds cheered on duelling gladiators, exotic performers, and beast tamers, who brought with them ferocious wild animals from the edges of the known world. Indeed, under the rule of the Augusti, Britain was more globally interconnected than ever before. Britain had never been an isolated land, its tribal elites having developed economic and cultural connections across the Atlantic Coast long before the arrival of Rome. But it was one thing to be part of an iron age exchange network, it was another to be part of a massive, tricontinental Empire. In the 2nd century AD, a Romano-Celtic aristocrat in Britain shared the same citizenship as a Berber in Mauritania, a Greek in Byzantium, and a Copt in Egypt and had ease of access to the products of those far-away places. The Roman Province of Britannia was a cosmopolitan land, and throughout Roman rule, plenty of civilians and military men from Italy, Asia Minor, Africa and beyond moved there. However, by and large, the majority of people who enjoyed her theatres and baths and prayed in her temples were not foreign transplants but Romanized Celtic natives, the direct descendants of the Kings, Queens and tribal elites of the island's indigenous population. Indeed, society in Roman Britain was founded on a strong Celtic bedrock. The Romans had not bulldozed over the human landscape that came before but co-opted it and built upon it. Many Romano-British civitas were built directly on top of pre-existing tribal hillforts and served as the administrative capital of a native tribe. For example, Isurium Brigantum, near modern day Aldborough, served as the capital of the Brigantes tribe, while Calleva Atrebatum, on the site of modern day Silchester, was the capital of the Atrebates tribe. Many of the countryside villas were also owned by Romanized Celtic elites. In fact, Fishborough Palace, the largest and most opulent Roman villa thus far discovered in England, is widely believed to have originally been built for Togidubnus, a King of the British Regni tribe who served as one of Rome's native client rulers. Celtic religion too endured the coming of the Latin overlord. The Romans hated the Druidic Order and violently suppressed it due to its practice of human sacrifice and the political influence it wielded. Other than that, the Romans were pretty tolerant of foreign cults. Throughout Imperial rule, many local British deities took on

new, Romanized forms and were equated to similar Gods in the Olympian Pantheon. The most famous example of this is Sulis, a Celtic life-giving mother goddess worshipped at a sacred thermal spring in Somerset. The Romans equated her with their Goddess of Wisdom, Minerva, resulting in the Romano-Britons worshipping the hybrid goddess Sulis-Minerva, a deity with both Celtic and Latin aspects. The Roman Bathhouse built over her sacred springs doubled as a temple for her worship. It is often said that language is the soul of a culture, and if so, then the soul of the Celtic Britons remained alive and well during Roman rule. Of course, Latin achieved a foothold on the island as it did everywhere else in the Empire, but it was adopted only by people who could afford a formal education and thus did not spread beyond the cities and the social elites. Even then, Romano-British aristocrats were probably bilingual, reserving Latin for use in legal matters, government, and business, while speaking Brittonic within intimate family circles. In the countryside, Brittonic remained the only language of the peasantry, for whom Roman rule had little to no cultural impact. Indeed, before the conquest, 90% of Celts had been subsistence farmers; afterwards, this figure did not change. Under Roman rule, peasants lived in the same tribal villages as their ancestors, speaking the same Celtic languages and cultivating the same crops. To the Iceni cooper or the Brigantian shepherd, it must have made little difference whether they paid a portion of their labours to a torque-wearing chieftain in a hillfort or to a toga-wearing governor in a villa. This was particularly true of the island's relatively untamed western hill country, which was like a time capsule of an era gone by. Here, life continued much the same as it had been before the Roman conquest. People continued to live almost exactly the same way their Iron Age ancestors had, their Celtic religion, language, artwork and oral tradition remaining more or less unchanged from the time before the Legions had marched into their lands. The 2nd century AD was the halcyon days of Roman rule in Britain, but over the next two hundred years, as the Empire came under increasing strain from threats both internal and external, its ability to maintain stable control over its northernmost island province became more and more tenuous. At its maximum territorial extent, the Roman Empire was so big that any further land conquests would put intense strain on the state apparatus. As the Empire shifted its geopolitical polity from outward expansion to inward-looking defence, it became increasingly mired with threats, both internal and external. In 235 AD, Emperor Severus Alexander was assassinated, and for the next fifty years, a period known as the Crisis of the Third Century, anarchy reigned. The Empire collapsed into endemic civil wars as multiple would-be usurpers contended for power, all while plague reaped a bloody harvest throughout the provinces, Germanic tribes from across the Rhine and the Danube migrated en masse into Imperial territory, and Rome's most dangerous rival, Sassanid Persia, pounced hungrily upon her enfeebled archnemesis like a lioness upon a wounded antelope. In the 260s, interneccine turmoil reached its peak, and the Empire broke apart, with two breakaway states forming: the Palmyrene Empire in the East and the Gallic Empire in the West, of which Britannia was a core territory. Thus, for a brief period, Britain fell out of Rome's control and into the command of a rogue Emperor acting in defiance of the central regime. This did not last long. By 274 AD, the Herculean Emperor Aurelian, "restorer of the world," defied the odds and glued everything back together. Thereafter, Britannia was embraced back into the bosom of mother Rome. However, in 286 AD, the Province was severed from the Italian heartland again when a Roman naval commander, Carausius, revolted, seized Britain, and declared himself Emperor of the Island. This, too, was short-lived. By 296 AD, Constantius, the Caesar of the West, had lassoed Britannia back into the Imperial fold. Both

of these British breakaway states enjoyed only a fleeting existence but were nevertheless symptoms of an overstrained Empire whose hold over Albion was becoming increasingly insecure. Throughout these tumultuous decades, opportunists on the outside looking in took advantage of the uncertain political and military situation, with raiders roving into the province with increasing frequency. From the north, Painted Picts and their tribal confederates skirted around a barely garrisoned Hadrian's wall with ease. From the west came the seaborne Gaelic pirates of the Irish Scottii tribe. From the east, a new threat emerged: a diverse coalition of tribal Germanic peoples from the North Sea coast, who history remembers as the Saxons, a familiar name for anyone even vaguely familiar with the history of early medieval England. For now, though, they were simple fairweather pirates. In an attempt to mitigate the threat of Saxon corsairs, a chain of fortresses was built along Britannia's eastern coast, headed by a Roman military officer known as the *comes littoris Saxonici per Britanniam*, or 'Count of the Saxon Shore.' Why this line of castles was called the Saxon Shore seems fairly obvious, given who they were built to defend against. However, as likely as it was that these structures were built to fight Saxons, it is very likely that they were manned by Saxons too. By the 4th century AD, the Imperial Military had been increasingly reliant on foederati: mercenaries recruited from friendly Germanic tribes on the Empires' peripheries. The Saxons were not a politically monolithic or even a monocultural people, so it is very likely that while some West Germanic warbands roved the British coastline as vandals and looters, others manned its coastal fortresses as defenders under the Imperial payroll. Either way, over the next two centuries, Britain became increasingly known to regional Saxon warlords as a place an ambitious man could adventure to seek his fortune, either as a raider or as a paid mercenary. Despite foreign invasions, barbarian migrations, financial woes and constant civil war putting an immense strain on its military power, the Imperial Court remained determined to ensure the security of Britannia, which remained one of its more economically productive provinces. In 305, Constantius, now senior Emperor of the western provinces, returned to the island he had restored to Imperial rule ten years earlier to campaign against the Picts, whose raids into Romano-British territory were growing increasingly destructive. Constantius scored a crushing victory over the ferocious Celtic woad warriors. However, during the campaign, the Augustus grew suddenly ill and died in York the following summer. Immediately after Constantius' death, the legions in York declared his son, Constantine, as their Emperor. Arguably the most capable and successful Emperor of late antiquity, Constantine's reign began where his father's ended: on Britannia's foggy shores. Picking up where Pops left off, the young Caesar drove the Picts back beyond the wall and the Saxon pirates back across the sea. The reign of Constantine, aptly dubbed 'The Great,' represented a renaissance in Roman authority over Britain and a return to peace and prosperity for the Romano-British citizenry. Moreover, after the enactment of the Edict of Milan in 313, his reign also presided over the rapid popularization of a certain monotheistic religion imported from the sands of the Levantine shore. Ultimately though, Constantine the Great's tenure proved to be naught but a brief reprieve in the slow decline of Roman rule over Britain. After his death, hardly a generation went by without some manner of attempted usurpation or revolt. As civil war became the de facto method by which Imperial succession was determined, Britain became a launchpad for various would-be Emperors, who would take the military garrisons on the island to wage war against their political rivals in the Imperial heartland, leaving the province vulnerable to barbarian raids. In 350 AD, Constans, the son of Constantine the Great, was overthrown and killed by the usurper Magnus Magnentius, a man who may have

been of Celtic Briton descent. Magnentius then drained Britannia of its legions to wage a war against another son of Constantine, Constantius II. Their climactic clash at the Battle of Mursa Major was one of the bloodiest battles in Roman history. Magnentius was eventually defeated, but so great were the losses on both sides that according to the Roman historian Zosimus, Rome was left so vulnerable that it was no longer capable of repelling barbarian incursions. In the case of Britain, he was right. After Magnentius, the Roman Britannia was left tantalizingly rich in portable wealth and perilously low on professional soldiers to defend it. Moreover, devastating civil wars aren't necessarily healthy for an Empire's financial stability vis a vis its ability to pay its troops, so what soldiers did remain in the Province were probably not being compensated for their services. All these factors piled up like a mound of dry kindling under a cauldron of disaster, and in 367 AD, the match was lit. That fateful year, the skeleton crew garrisoned on Hadrian's wall, who had been snubbed of one too many paycheques, mutinied and threw open their gates, allowing the marauding Picts to flood into Roman territory en masse. Simultaneously, the Saxons of Germania and the Irish Scotti crashed upon the island's eastern and western shores in full force, easily bypassing the coastal defenses which had been built up to keep them out. The Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus called this invasion the *barbarica conspiratio*, or the Great Barbarian Conspiracy. As Britannia was invaded from Ireland, Scotland and Northern Germany at the exact same time as the largest garrison of Roman soldiers on the island revolted, its easy to understand why dismayed Roman observers considered that to be coordination, not coincidence. Southern Britain was completely overrun, and lawlessness was the order of the day. Villas were plundered, cities were sacked, and the Romanized civilian population were subjected to massacres and enslavement. Among the plunderers were not just barbarian raiders, but escaped slaves and deserted Roman soldiers, who were happy to jump on the anarchy bandwagon to enrich themselves with plunder. For the better part of a year, Britannia was basically just "The Purge." Only in the spring of 368 was one Flavius Theodosius, father of future Emperor Theodosius the Great, able to deploy a relief force to the island. Fortunately for Rome, the barbarian invaders had not come to conquer land, but merely to enrich themselves with slaves, cattle, and portable wealth. So, by the time Theodosius the Elder made landfall, what had once been a highly coordinated invasion force had devolved into a bunch of small plundering bands, their baggage trains heavy with loot. This made it easy for the Roman reinforcements to mop up the island piecemeal. By the end of the year, the barbarians had been driven back to their homelands; the mutineers had been executed; Hadrian's Wall had been retaken and order had returned to Britannia. Crisis had been averted, and a province seemingly on the verge of being lost had been restored to Roman control. However, Theodosius' triumph over the barbarian hordes was ultimately just a delaying of the inevitable, for in the decades that followed, the endemic problems contributing to the Empires' weakening hold on the island resumed in due course. Born a Spaniard, Magnus Maximus was a Roman military officer who served under Theodosius the Elder during the de-Purgifying of Britain in 367. In 380 he returned to the isle to campaign against the Picts and the Irish Scottii, becoming very popular with his troops in the process. You can probably already tell where this is going. In 383 AD, Magnus Maximus became the latest in a line of Imperial usurpers to launch his bid for power from Britannia's shores. To raise an army against Gratian, the reigning western Roman Empire, the pretender absorbed every fortress garrison in northern and western Britain into his field army. These fortresses were never reoccupied, permanently ending the Roman military presence in what had traditionally been the less developed

regions of the British province. The following year, Magnus Maximus defeated Gratian, and became senior Augustus of the Western Empire. To replace the Imperial troops he had stripped from the British hinterlands, Emperor Maximus transferred authority in those regions to local Roman-aligned native chieftains, entrusting them to safeguard the western British highlands on the Empire's behalf. This effectively gave autonomous home rule to the local Celtic Britons. In traditional folklore, this moment serves as the genesis of medieval Wales. Many of the Brythonic, Welsh-speaking Kingdoms of the middle ages considered their royal dynasties to be directly descended from the native chieftains originally appointed by Magnus Maximus to defend the British frontier from Irish and Pictish raiders. Magnus Maximus occupied an honoured role in the royal genealogies of Kingdoms like Gwynedd, Powys, Gwent and Strathclyde, all of whom endured into the High Middle Ages, for nearly a thousand years after Rome's final departure from Albion's shores. In 388, Emperor Maximus' reign came to an ignominious end after a civil war with the Eastern Emperor Theodosius. In the centuries that followed, the security of the Romano-Britons became increasingly imperiled, with Pictish, Irish and Saxon raids renewing in force, ravaging not just the Roman confederated tribal lands of the North and West, but marauding with impunity into the urbanized south-east, which was still under direct Imperial administration. Some time around 396 AD, Stilicho, the de facto generalissimo of a decaying Western Roman Empire, likely launched a naval campaign intended to stymie these seaborne raids. This was a half measure, but it was all that could be done. Stilicho could launch a punitive expedition, but he could spare no troops to permanently garrison the island. His would be the last Roman campaign in Britain of which there is any record. In 401 AD, with the Visigothic King Alaric and the Ostrogothic King Radagaisus baring down upon the Eternal City itself, Rome was increasingly forced to withdraw yet more soldiers from Britain to protect its Italian heartland. That year, Stilicho stripped the fortresses of the Saxon Shore of their military manpower. Additionally, Hadrian's wall, which had stood as an ardent symbol of Roman dominance over Britain, was depleted of troops for the final time. In the years that followed, the scope of raids on Romano-British territories increased. Niall of the Nine Hostages, a legendary High King of Ireland, was said to have ravaged the southern coast of Britain in 405 AD. The last remaining troops in Roman Britain, a meagre 6,000 or so men, were growing deeply disgruntled. They had been left to defend an island which had been stripped of its defenses and all but forgotten by their Imperial overlord, and they had not been paid for several years to boot. In 407 AD, they revolted, appointing a military officer named Flavius Claudius Constantinus as their Emperor, who led them onto the continent in an attempt to overthrow the reigning Emperor Honorius and his commander-in-chief Stilicho. This insurrection was put down by one of Honorius' Gothic foederati. After this, there were no more Roman army personnel remaining in Britain. In 410 AD, Alaric and his Goths became the first foreign army to sack the Eternal City since Brennus and the Senones Gauls did so 800 years earlier. Deep in its death throes, it was all the Western Empire could manage just to stay alive for another few decades. With Germanic invaders now overrunning Gaul, Hispania and Africa, what thought could Rome spare for faraway Britannia? With no other recourse, the province was written off for the last time, and left to fate. Thus, Roman rule over the island of Britain had officially and permanently ended, and first time in 400 years, all of Albion, for better or worse, was free. The centuries immediately after this departure are known as "Sub-Roman Britain." As the Romans took with them their habit of thorough record-keeping, this era is largely shrouded in mystery. After the fall of Rome, Britain was the last bastion of the Celts

in Europe. But as the Empire retreated from Albion's shores, it left the land vastly different from how it found it. In the south and east, a cast of Christian, Romanized Britons clung to the memory of the Emperors who had long abandoned them. In the north, the unconquered Picts and Gaels now stood poised to invade their acculturated cousins, eager to pick at riches left behind by the dead monster that was Rome. But as the last Celts of Europe geared up to fight one another, a new threat was emerging from the east. From the shores of the north sea, hardened men were nearing the coast of Britain, with the hammer of Thunor hung around their necks, and prayer to Woden on their lips. One thing we know is that even after centuries of Latin occupation, Celtic society was alive and well in Britain, enjoying a better fate than its continental cousins. From Cornwall to the Forth-Clyde, the language of Queen Boudicca survived as a variety of P-Celtic dialects broadly classified as "Common Brythonic." Meanwhile, the Q-Celtic tongue of Gaelic continued to thrive in Ireland. Finally, in the Scottish Highlands, the Picts howled their war cries with words that distantly related to the tongues to their South. It is also likely that in more urbanized areas, a form of Latin was still in use as one of the many remnants of Britain's recent Imperial past. Indeed, many Britons had grown exceedingly accustomed to Roman comforts and those habits persisted even after Rome's departure. But how 'Roman' was sub-Roman Britain? Robin Fleming, author of *Britain after Rome*, poignantly describes this post-Imperial world to us: "In the year 420, there were still people in Britain who had been born in a world shaped by the structure of Empire, people whose early lives had been ordered by Rome's material culture. There were those whose childhood dinners had been served on pewter and glass, and middle aged men who had been raised in heated villas." Britain had once been connected to a continent-spanning Empire whose infrastructure brought them the luxuries of Italy, Egypt and Syria, allowing many Romanized Britons to enjoy an aristocratic station in countryside villas and wealthy cities. But when Rome left, so too did the means to make this way of life possible. Archaeological evidence suggests that in the 5th century, the old world order began rapidly collapsing, as former Roman cities either drastically shrunk in size or became ghost towns, while the majority of the islands' villas were abandoned. As Romanitas decayed, older Celtic traditions emerged from its carcass. Some Britons seem to have moved back into ancient Celtic hill forts, which had stood abandoned for centuries during Roman rule. This massive shift in the standard of living probably hit the south and east the hardest. The transition was probably easier for the Britons of the north and the west, who had never been particularly Romanized. It also stands to reason that the Picts and Gaels, who for the most part had always been on the outside looking in, experienced barely any change to their daily lives in this era. However, we should be mindful of the possibility that the Roman lifestyle did not vanish from Britain as quickly as previously thought. The archaeological record suggests that in the 5th century, traders from as far away as Byzantium and North Africa still braved the long journey, most likely due to the Islands' valuable tin deposits. It, therefore, is likely that, for a time, some Romano-Britons used this limited foreign trade to maintain a pale imitation of Roman life. Material culture was not the only aspect of Celtic society undergoing a metamorphosis. In centuries past, Roman Britain had been a land of many Gods. Native Celtic deities were worshiped alongside Greco-Latin ones, while Gods from the furthest edge of the known world established mystery cults in Britain. These included Isis, an Egyptian goddess, and Mithras, an Iranian God who became popular among Romano-British soldiers. However, by far the most successful religion the Romans introduced to Britain was that of the Levantine carpenter. Christianity arrived on the isle as early as the 200sAD,

and by the time Rome abandoned Britain, had become the dominant religion. While the cross spread rapidly through the British isles, those who lived there never truly forgot their polytheist roots. Even under the pressure of increasing Christian zealotry, pagan cults probably survived throughout and beyond the 5th century. There may even have been some Druidic circles still practicing their occult rites in secluded groves, longing for a return of the old ways. Many Celts also incorporated the rituals of their ancestors into their newly Christian lives. One example of this lies in Ireland, where the Spring Goddess Brigid was rebranded as the exalted St. Brigid, patron of Ireland. Her feast day coincides with Imbolc, a pagan festival celebrating the coming of Spring. Other pagan rites survived Christianization as well, such as the balefires of Beltane and Samhain, where Brythonic and Gaelic peoples alike would thin the lines between themselves and the otherworld, known either as Annwn or Tír na nÓg: the land where the faerie folk dwelled. In the wake of Roman departure, Britain became a patchwork of petty Kingdoms. Remarkably, many of these Kingdoms appear to have been formed upon pre-Roman tribal lines, as ancient iron-age identities re-emerged. Most of these realms are poorly represented in the historical record, but others, such as Powys, Dumnonia, Gwynedd and Strathclyde are better attested to by virtue of having endured well into the middle ages, as opposed to the ones extinguished much earlier on by a certain wave of Germanic migrations. Our main primary source on the wars of this era come from an early 6th century monk known as Gildas. His work, titled *De Excidio et Conquestu Britaaniae*, or “On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain”, tells a vivid story of chaos and invasions. *De Excidio* was not written by a trained historian, but by a devout Christian clergyman writing a religious polemic. Nevertheless, since Gildas’ work is the by far the most intact source from this era, historians still find themselves reliant on the old monk’s writings. His recounting of the 5th century begins with a scene of immediate havoc: “No sooner were the Romans gone, than the Picts and the Scots, like worms which in the heat of mid-day came forth. inspired with the same avidity for blood.” At this time, the Picts and Scots were probably still predominantly pagan, which would explain why Gildas speaks of them so scathingly. The monk’s story continues when the Romano-Christian Britons, beset upon by the relentless raiding of their savage cousins, sent a plea to the declining Roman Empire. “The barbarians drive us to the sea; the sea throws us back on the barbarians: thus two modes of death await us, we are either slain or drowned.” Of course, the Romans, only a few decades away from the final collapse of their Empire, could offer no salvation. Gildas’ tells a visceral tale. But his narrative of a victimized Christian people in the face of pagan barbarity most likely tilted. The Romano-Britons were probably just as warlike as their Celtic cousins, all too willing to invade their neighbours, regardless of the shared culture, language, or faith. With that said, there is some truth to the monks’ tale. The Gaelic peoples seem to have established colonial realms in the west coast of Britain from the late 4th century onwards. In most of these, they appear to have merged into the culture of the local Brythonic peoples. But in the Kingdom of Dál Riata, founded by the Scotii warriors of Ulster, they began slow cultural assimilation of the local Picts. Consequently, the modern nation of Scotland derives its name from the Scotii tribe, and the Scottish Gaelic language still spoken in the country today is a remnant of those Irish roots. However, it would be neither Pict nor Gael that would be the ultimate game-changers of Sub-Roman Britain. What exactly defines an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ is a heated historiographic debate, but broadly speaking, they were a diverse amalgamation of tribes from Scandinavian and North German coastline, primarily consisting of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. They were hardy warriors who spoke west Germanic languages and worshipped a pagan

pantheon similar to the one made famous by the Norse Vikings centuries later. Amongst scholarly circles, the ‘whens’ ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of the Germanic migrations are topics of intense debate. As we will recall, the presence of Saxons on British shores can be traced back long before the fall of Rome. Seaborne Saxon warbands had been intermittently raiding the eastern coastline of the erstwhile Roman province for centuries, and as Imperial control over Britain declined, it had become common practice for Roman officials or Romano-British to hire Saxon warriors as paid mercenaries. According to Gildas, the burden of the Saxon tide falls upon the historically dubious Romano-British king named Vortigern. His reign was a tumultuous one, faced with hordes of marauding Pictish raiders, Vortigern was forced to turn to soldiers of fortune from overseas. Accordingly, help came from the Germanic warriors of the North sea. Gildas does not elaborate much on the exact identity of these foreign mercenaries, but another early medieval chronicler, the English Monk Bede, claims they were led by two Chieftains of the Jutes: Hengist and Horsa, whose names translate to ‘Stallion’ and ‘Horse’ in Old English. Gildas colors us with his opinion on this hiring: “the British King and his councillors were so blinded, that as a protection to their country, they sealed its doom by inviting wolves into the sheepfold: the fierce and impious Saxons, a race hateful to both God and men.” Tradition has it that in the year 449, the brothers defeated the Picts, then promptly betrayed their Romano-British hosts, conquering a swath of south-eastern Britain that would become the Kingdom of Kent. More Germanic migrants would follow in the brothers’ wake, and by 500, it seemed as if the western half of England was firmly in Angle, Saxon, or Jutish hands. These territories became known to the Celtic Britons as ‘Lloegyr’: the lost lands. It was likely around this time that some Britons who lived on the islands’ southwest began taking to the seas in flight from the Germanic invaders. They established themselves in the Armorican peninsula, the first of several waves of settlers to arrive in the region. Thus the peninsula became known as Brittany, after the Britons who settled it. Anecdotally, a region that had been Celtic-speaking in ancient times, but was then thoroughly Latinized by the Roman Empire, was re-Celticized by British refugees centuries later, and retains its Celtic language and identity to this day. The Saxons had established themselves in Britain, but it appears that for a time, the natives were able to keep them contained by winning a series of military victories, led, if legend is to be believed, by a certain Dux Bellorum named Arthur. Herein lies the great mystery. Was Arthur a real historical figure? If he did exist, it was not amongst the knights, wizards, and castles of the high Medieval era, but the spears and hillforts of Sub-Roman Britain. The name first appears in a 6th century compendium of Welsh poems known as the Gododdin. Here, a Briton hero named Guaurdur was described as “Not Arthur, amongst equals in might of feats.” This line implies that Arthur was a well known figure to the 6th century Celts, and was considered the benchmark for heroism in his age. Nennius, a Welsh monk writing in the 9th century, attributed twelve great battles to the semi-mythical warlord, the most triumphant one occurring in the early 500s AD at a place called Mynydd Badon, generally considered to be modern day Bath. Leading warriors’ from across the Brythonic Kingdoms, the warlord of legend vanquished an army led by King Aelle of the South Saxons, thereby breaking Germanic power in Britain, and delaying their advance for an entire generation. With that said, Nennius’ accounts should be taken with a mountain of salt, as there is very little evidence that anyone named Arthur fought in any of the battles mentioned. Gildas, writing far closer to the time period in question, attributes Briton victory at Mynydd Badon not to Arthur, but to a Romanized commander named Ambrosius Aurelian. With that said, when myth and folklore is

stripped away, it does seem that with or without Arthurs' help, the Britons were able to fend off the Anglo-Saxons, albeit only temporarily. Within a few decades of Mynnydd Baddon, the Anglo-Saxons had evidently recovered, with powerful Kingdoms established deep in Lloegyr, straddling the borders of unconquered Celtic lands. The Angles and Saxons who lived in these Kingdoms were no longer transient invaders, but had lived in Britain for generations, working the same land their fathers and grandfathers had. In short, they were there to stay. Thus, in the second half of the 6th century, the forebears of the English began to push westwards once more, marching boldly into the lands of the men they called Wealas- foreigners. In 577 AD, one King Ceawlin of the nascent Kingdom of Wessex met three British Kings: Commal, Condidan, and Farinmail, in a battle at Hinton Hill near the modern township of Dyrham. Saxons routed the Celtic warriors, and as a result, Ceawlin was able to expand his territories right onto the Severn Estuary, severing the land connection between the Britons of Cornwall and Wales. This invariably led to a cultural drift between newly separated Celtic territories, resulting in the Common Brittonic spoken in those regions evolving into the separate languages of Cornish and Welsh. A few decades after the triumph of Saxon Wessex, the Angles of the North began a campaign of their own. King Æthelfrith of Bernicia carved a bloody path of Conquest deep into northern Brythonic Kingdoms like Rheged, Elmet and Goddodin, and crushed the Gaelic King Áedán mac Gabráin of Dál Riata at the battle of Deksastan in 603AD, establishing the Angles as the most dominant people north of the Humber. It must be noted that, in the land conquered by Germanic peoples, native Celtic culture was likely not entirely wiped away. The names of English Kingdoms like Bernicia and Kent have Celtic origins, and some Briton blood likely ran through the veins of their earliest Kings. The remains of brooch jewelry found in early Saxon graves have shown that the early Germanic settlers borrowed from the artistic traditions of the Britons. As for the Britons themselves, those who lived in Lloegyr were slowly assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon culture over many generations. The line between Saxon and Celt was often more blurred than we think. Nevertheless, a frontier still existed between communities who spoke old English, and communities that spoke Brittonic and Gaelic. By the dawn of the 7th century, this frontier had become more or less entrenched, and would not move in any dramatic way for centuries. Be it by Roman or Germanic invaders, the Celts had lost much over the last thousand years or so. One can only wonder if a Welsh Bowman in the 6th century AD, looking across a dyke at a line of Saxon spears, would have been remotely aware of the fact that his ancestors' culture had once spread across an entire continent, a culture that was now confined to the westernmost edge of Britain. The days when Gallic hordes marched into the heart of Greece, or dueled Roman legions from Spain to Turkey were long gone. But, as territorially diminished as the Celts were, they would not go quietly into the night. As late antiquity transitioned into the middle ages, the stage was set for Europe's most enigmatic people to make their mark upon the Medieval world. In the east, the ancestral home of the Brythonic peoples had fallen to Saxon invaders, but in the west, the heirs of Arthur would defy the rule of the nascent English people for centuries yet. Thus, the history of Medieval Wales and her sister states in Cornwall, Brittany and Yr Hen Ogledd began. Meanwhile, with howling Picts and Northumbrians on their doorstep, the Gaels of Dal Riata would write their own saga of blood and battle, eventually giving rise to the Kingdom of Scotland. Finally, across the narrow sea, Ireland would remain a relatively isolated land of interneccine chieftains. But in time, the outside world would come knocking on their door, in the form of Vikings, Normans, and beyond.

12 Full History of Medieval Wales - Animated Medieval History

J.R.R. Tolkien once remarked: “Welsh is of this soil, this island, the senior language of the men of Britain; Welsh is beautiful.” Today, Wales is seen as the sleepy, rural periphery of the United Kingdom, but deeply rooted in its idyllic rolling hills is the vibrant history of the Celtic Britons, a people who have had as many mighty warlords as they have pages of beautiful poetry. Even today, in a world so thoroughly dominated by a Globalized English language, Wales retains its ancient culture, folklore, and unique tongue. Welcome to our special longform documentary on the land of the Dragon, where we will explore the entire medieval history of the Celtic Britons, and their centuries-long struggle against the Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans. The struggle would lead to Welsh troops becoming key parts of the armies that conquered them. The Celtic peoples have inhabited the British isles since antiquity, but for the first four centuries of the common era, they did so under the overlordship of the Roman Empire. After Imperial authority collapsed, and the last legions departed from the island in 410 AD, a new form of occupier would take root in Britain. Throughout the 5th and 6th centuries AD, Germanic tribes like the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians began making increasing headway into the isle. Whether this was defined by large-scale invasion or by relatively peaceful assimilation is still up for debate. However, it is in this murky era that the legend of King Arthur is historically rooted[1] . In any case, by 600 AD, the eastern lowlands of Britain were dominated by the Germanic ancestors of the English, while Celtic-speaking polities, the ancestors of the Welsh, were pushed into the western highlands. Throughout medieval history, there was never a single Welsh state, but rather, a multitude of smaller kingdoms united culturally, through a shared corpus of folklore and similar languages. These small polities were not just localized to what is now modern Wales, but also in parts of what is now England and the Scottish Lowlands, where proto-Welsh Kingdoms endured well into the middle ages. It also bears mentioning that the Welsh, who we will refer to interchangeably as the Britons, Brittonic, Brythonic, or Cumbric peoples[2] , were not the only Celtic-speaking polities in the middle ages. In Ireland, the Gaels predominated, from where they spread to the Scottish Highlands, competing with the local Pictish tribes for dominance. Another medieval Celtic land of note is the French peninsula of Brittany. Culturally and linguistically closely related to the Welsh, the Bretons maintained their political autonomy from their Frankish and Norman neighbors for centuries, while maintaining regular contact with their cousins across the channel. Before we get into the history of Medieval Wales, let us briefly explore their culture and society. In the overall landscape of early Britain in the middle ages, the cultural achievements of the Celtic Britons are often sidelined in order to focus on those of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms or, later, the Norse invaders. Undeservedly so, for in contrast to the common narrative which portrays them as the poorest periphery of Britain, the Welsh possessed as much high culture as anywhere else in Europe at the time. Old Welsh poetry, for example, is extremely extensive and complex. Any fans of modern western fantasy will likely be familiar with the archetype of the “Bard”[3] , which was originally an ancient Celtic, and later Medieval Welsh word. Throughout the Brythonic world, Bards were highly respected, and often invited to the courts of Kings to compose grand epics which would glorify that monarch. Some Bards would themselves become legends of great renown, such as Aneirin and Taliesin, two sixth century poets whose wide corpus of works include everything from epic poems of

great battles, to children's lullabies. Their works survive to this day, albeit not in their original forms.[4] Editorially, it can be said that what Homer was to the Greeks, Aneirin and Taliesin were to the Welsh. Another accomplished pillar of medieval Welsh society was its Church. Christianity had taken root in Britain during the Late Roman Empire, and by the 6th century AD had become the predominant faith among the Celtic Britons. Welsh Christianity had its own local flavour, by virtue of its home-bred saints. Originally, these saints were Britons who had lived during Roman rule and had been martyred by the Augusti for their faith, such as St. Alban. However, after the Roman departure, British Saints often took on the form of pious royalty, such as St. Cybi, a Prince of Cornwall who supposedly went on pilgrimage all the way to Jerusalem, and upon his return, turned down his rightful throne to instead preach and build Churches throughout the realm. [5] Holy sites to various Celtic Saints dotted the lands of the Medieval Cumbric peoples, and pilgrimages to them were regularly made by the common people. Between the 6th and 8th centuries, Celtic Christianity was fairly isolated from its mother Church in Rome, and thus developed certain schismatic beliefs, such as a different method in calculating the date of Easter. However, by the 9th century, these schisms had largely been healed due to kings like Cyngen ap Cadell of Powys who were recorded to have made pilgrimages to Rome.[6] It should also be noted that, between the 5th and 7th centuries AD, interactions between the Britons and their Anglo-Saxon neighbours were often tinged with religious tension, for the former were largely Christian, while the latter still held to a pantheon of Pagan Gods similar to the ones made famous by the Norse Vikings in later centuries. However, by the 700s AD, the forebears of the English had embraced Roman Christianity. [7] What we have thus far covered of early Welsh society barely scratches the surface of its depth and complexity, and there is much more that can be explored, such as their nuanced legal codes, refined artwork, and sophisticated court culture, but for brevity's sake, we will now have to move on. Let us now take a tour of western Britain in the sixth and seventh centuries, and examine how the Cymric peoples from Somerset to Lanarkshire interacted with the various Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms to their immediate east. In doing this, we must consider the nature of the surviving textual evidence from this era. Although English monks like the venerable Bede and Welsh chroniclers and poets like Nennius and the aforementioned Aneirin provide us with invaluable insights into the events of their age[8] , their accounting of events is often clouded by the biases of their time, and should be examined through a critical lens. With that covered, let us begin with Yr Hen Ogledd: the old North, a region home to major Brittonic Kingdoms like Elmet, Gododdin, Rheged, and Strathclyde, who by the 6th century, shared an eastern border with the Anglic Kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira[9] . During their natal years, these proto-English Kingdoms appear to have been smaller and weaker than their Briton neighbours, and Bernicia may even have intermittently been a tributary state to the Cumbric Kings of Gododdin. This, however, would change with the ascension of Æthelfrith, king of Bernicia, who according to Bede was 'a most powerful king, who, more than all the leaders of the English, harried the people of the Britons.' This is seemingly corroborated in Aneirin's old Welsh poem, *Y Gododdin*: an elegy to king Mynyddog Mwynfawr[10] of Gododdin, who around 600 AD lost his Kingdom to the Angles, who were probably aided by the Kingdom of Rheged. Æthelfrith's successor, Edwin, shared his predecessors' expansionist ambitions[11] , and both Bede and Nennius seem to agree that he conquered Elmet, the second of the four major northern Brittonic Kingdoms. However, this ambition would provoke retaliation in the form of Cadwallon ap Cadfan, King of Gwynedd. In response to Edwin's encroachment on his territory[12]

, Cadwallon forged an alliance with Penda, a Prince of Mercia, and with his help, led the Britons of the north into open rebellion against Edwin. At the Battle of Hatfield Chase in October of 633, Cadwallon crushed Edwin's armies, then conquered the entirety of Northern England. Cadwallon's ascendancy would be short-lived, for he would be killed in the Battle of Heavensfield by Oswald, son of Æthelfrith, allowing the Bernician royal line to once more assert dominance in the North of England in the ensuing decade, unite with Deira to form of the Kingdom of Northumbria. The legacy of Cadwallon ap Cadfan of Gwynedd is seemingly divided along ethnic lines. English commentators like Bede portray him as the most tyrannical despot the English ever faced, while Welsh poems portray him as the greatest hero among the Briton warrior-kings. If we, as modern observers, can draw any takeaways from Cadwallon's reign, it is that his cooperation with Penda of Mercia tells us that there was never a binary struggle between Celtic Briton and Anglo-Saxon, but rather a deeply complex political landscape where cooperation often extended beyond religious, ethnic and linguistic lines. [13] Indeed, the frequent cross-pollination of Picts, Gaels, Angles, Saxons, and Britons in the old North often blurred the lines where one culture ended and another began. By 731, most of the Brythonic lands of Yr Hen Ogledd were once more under Northumbrian lordship, save for Strathclyde, which would survive as a distinct political entity into the 11th century. However, textual evidence suggests that in lands ruled by the Northumbrians, the Celtic language of the Northern Britons survived for centuries even after their Kingdoms had been extinguished. Let us now move from the northern end of the medieval Brythonic world to the very south of it. For much of history, the peninsula of Cornwall was distinctly a Celtic land. [14] In the early middle ages, Cornwall, alongside Devon, were part of the Kingdom of Dumnonia. In times past, Dumnonia had been joined by land to its sister-Kingdoms in Wales proper, but this connection was severed after the Battle of Deorham in 577, wherein Worcester and Gloucester became part of the Saxon Kingdom of Hwicce, later a Mercian client-state. [15] Whereas the histories of the northern Celtic Britons were defined primarily by their relationship to the Northern Angles, their southern cousins were defined by their relationship with the West Saxons, and as a general trend, the 8th century saw the Dumnonii gradually pushed westwards by the Kingdom of Wessex. The exact nature of these conflicts is obscured by a lack of detailed surviving sources. For example, the Annales Cambriae, a medieval Latin anthology of Welsh history, notes that in 722, the southern Britons won a victory at the Battle of Hehil, located somewhere in Devon. The Annales do not specify who this victory was won against, but most historians agree it was likely against Wessex, thereby allowing the Britons to successfully stymie West Saxon expansion for a time. This, however, would be temporary, and by the reign of Alfred the Great, Devon had long since been absorbed into the Kingdom of Wessex, and the Cornish peninsula, while maintaining some form of Brittonic autonomy, would be under the political domination of the West Saxon Kings. With that said, although Cornwall would eventually become an integral part of the Kingdom of England, the Brythonic language spoken there survived for nearly a millennia afterwards. [16] Let us now shift our focus to central Britain, where Kingdoms like Gwent, Dyfed, Powys, and the aforementioned Gwynedd thrived. Throughout the 7th century, these Brittonic polities bordered the Mercians, who for the most part, they enjoyed amiable relations with. As it was in the old north, the ethnic boundaries between these lands were blurred, with plenty of cultural cross-pollination and intermarriage occurring across ethnic lines. Moreover, both Briton and Mercian Kings had a common enemy, the Angles of Northumbria. We have already covered how Cadwallon of Gwynedd and Prince Penda of Mercia teamed

up to defeat Edwin of Deira. However, this would not be the last time that Britons and Mercians fought side by side. In 642, Penda, now King of the Mercians, would once more meet the Northern Angles in battle alongside an alliance of Briton warriors from Powys and Gwynedd, the latter of whom had been sent by King Cadwaladr, son of the infamous Cadwallon. With Welsh aid, Penda was able to slay the Bernician King, Oswald, in battle.[17] Penda's victories over the Northumbrians made him the most powerful Anglo-Saxon ruler in Britain, laying the foundations for an era of Mercian supremacy. Thus, the Early Medieval Welsh Kingdoms not only were masters of their own destiny, but, through their role in elevating Penda, crucial power players in the politics of their Anglo-Saxon neighbours as well. Over time, the relationship the Britons enjoyed with Mercia began to sour. The catalyst for this occurred in 685, when the Picts crushed the army of the Northumbrian King Ecgfrith at the battle of Dun Nechtain. This defeat was the capstone in the collapse of Northumbria's expansionist ambitions. In its place, Mercia became the most imperialistic Kingdom in Britain, expanding its dominance throughout the midlands and the south of England[18] throughout the 700s AD, and looking to Wales for further territorial gains. In the modern parish of Llantysilio-yn-Iâl is a stone column known as the pillar of Eliseg. Erected during the reign of King Cyngen ap Cadell of Powys [808-854 AD], the stone is inscribed in Latin with the deeds of that King's ancestors. Among these, are the victories of Cyngen's great grandfather, Elise ap Gwylog, who "seized the inheritance of Powys from the power of the English by force." Through this, we can deduce that around the mid-700s, Powys had come under Mercian domination, but Elise ap Gwylog launched a successful rebellion to reclaim his realm. This may have occurred in 757, when the murder of King Æthelbald threw Mercia into a succession crisis. After this succession crisis, King Offa would ascend to the throne of Mercia, and rule from late 757 to 796. The Annales Cambriae records that Offa frequently campaigned against the Britons on his western frontier, with his most likely enemy being the resurgent kingdom of Powys, if we take the inscriptions on the Pillar of Eliseg into account. Evidently, the Welsh became troublesome enough that, late in his reign, Offa sponsored the creation of a massive earthen ditch-and-wall to be dug out along the frontier lands between his domain and the Kingdom of Powys. This 132-kilometer-long fortification, known titularly as Offa's Dyke, indents the landscape to this day, although historians still debate its true nature and purpose. Ostensibly, a giant border ditch seems like an antagonistic act. However, at certain points, the path of the dyke veers eastwards to leave key fortresses and fertile valleys in Welsh hands, indicating that the dyke was a mutually agreed upon boundary rather than an act of Mercian territorial aggression. Moreover, while the previously blurred ethnic boundaries between Briton and Anglo-Saxon became more strictly defined after the erection of Offa's Dyke, some, but not all historians assert that cross-border movement, for trade and other purposes, continued in a more tightly controlled manner even after the Dyke's construction. The erection of Offa's Dyke did not affect the Mercian desire to establish a zone of hegemony over the Welsh Kingdoms, as they had with other periphery zones like Kent and Wessex. According to the Annales Cambriae, Offa's successor, King Coenwulf, waged war on Dyfed and Gwynedd in 798, during which the latter's king, Caradog ap Meirion, perished in battle. However, the gains Coenwulf achieved through these victories did not seem to be major, or particularly permanent. Ultimately, surviving historical evidence from this era is scant, but the existence of Offa's dyke and the inscriptions on the Pillar of Eliseg come together to form a basic historical narrative where, throughout the 700s and 800s AD, Mercia would intermittently use political or military force to establish supremacy

over various Welsh border Kingdoms, but the Welsh would usually manage to reassert their sovereignty[19] , and re-establish civil political relations with their Anglo-Saxon neighbours. In 865 AD, the balance of power in Britain was severely disrupted as a new player entered the game, in the form of a great heathen army, and it is here that we will end the first episode of our history of the Welsh. The story of the Vikings in Britain has been told exhaustively from the perspective of the Anglo-Saxons and the Norsemen, but in our next episode, we will tell that era of history from the perspective of the Celtic Britons, as dynamic rulers like Rhodri the Great and Hywel Dda unite the Welsh Kingdoms, fend off the incursions of the Danes and usher in an age of learning and prosperity while Strathclyde, the last Briton Kingdom of the old North, experiences its twilight years. At the turn of the 8th century, the geopolitical status quo of Britain would undergo a dramatic shift. In the year 793 AD, Lindisfarne, the holiest monastery of the Kingdom of Northumbria, was brutally sacked by people history remembers as ‘Vikings’. [1] Throughout the next few decades, waves of Danish and Norse raiders and settlers would continue to arrive on Anglo-Saxon shores. This eventually culminated in the invasion of a great heathen army in 865 AD, in which three out of the four of the great Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Northumbria, East Anglia, and Mercia, were overrun by Danes, with the Kingdom of Wessex and its royal scion, Alfred, being the lone holdout. While the lands of the Anglo-Saxons were consumed by the ingress of pagan Norsemen, the land of the Britons would see an inverse trend of stabilization, as a new dynasty, the Merfynion of Gwynedd, came to power. Before we delve further into the march of history, we should talk about the sources available to us from this era. Manuscripts like the Harleian genealogy, the Brut y Tywysogion, and the Annales Cambriae offer us valuable insight into the succession of Welsh Kings and the events of the Viking age from the Welsh perspective. However, it should be noted that while primary sources like these give us an invaluable window into the world of Viking age Wales, they are, like all medieval documents, full of anachronisms, internal contradictions, and heavy biases. [2] As such, what follows is merely our best interpretation of an era still shrouded in mystery and uncertainty. In 825, Merfyn Frych, a native of the Isle of Man[3] , seized the throne of the Kingdom of Gwynedd, where his descendants would rule until their domain was annexed into the Kingdom of England in the year 1283. It is not known how exactly Merfyn Frych came to become ruler of Gwynedd. Being from the Isle of Man, it is possible he was dislodged from there by Norse Raiders and forced to take refuge across the water in Gwynedd. Indeed, Viking longboats were active in the Irish sea at the dawn of the 800s AD, where they raided, traded, and established settlements along the Hebrides Islands and the Irish coast.[4] From 816, Gwynedd had been plunged into turmoil, as two brothers, Hywel ap Rhodri Molwynog and Cynan Dindaethwy ap Rhodri, fought a bloody civil war for the throne, all while the bellicose King Coenwulf of Mercia’s armies ravaged throughout all of the Welsh Kingdoms.[5] By 825, both brothers had died, and a Wessex victory over Mercia at the battle of Ellendun triggered the end of the Mercian presence in Wales, at least for now. These elements combined to create a power vacuum in Gwynedd, which Merfyn Frych promptly filled. We know almost nothing about Merfyn’s reign as King of Gwynedd, only that he ruled until the year 844, when he died in battle against an unidentified foe. He would be succeeded by his son: known as Rhodri Mawr: Rhodri the Great. Rhodri Mawr inherited the throne of Gwynedd at a good time, for the Kingdom’s traditional Mercian enemies were too busy fighting either their Saxon kinsmen in Wessex or the increasingly troublesome Viking raiders to partake in their favourite past-time of trying to subjugate the Welsh. Taking advantage of this peace, Rhodri set his eyes upon

expansion. In 855 AD, King Cyngen ap Cadell of Powys died in exile in faraway Rome, ostensibly leaving no heirs. Pressing a dynastic claim to Powys' vacant throne through his mother, Nest ferch Cadell, sister of the late King Cyngen, Rhodri annexed Powys into his realm. [6] As Rhodri expanded his influence over the Welsh peoples, he found out that Wales was not exempt from the Viking raids which plagued the rest of the British isles. However, the son of Merfyn was dynamic and capable in his military leadership, and was able to repulse the Northmen invasions, slaying a Viking warlord named Ormr in 856. Rhodri's expansions throughout the Welsh lands continued in the following decades, when in 872, Gwgon, the last in the traditional line of kings of Seisyllwg, drowned, leaving no heir. In prior years, Rhodri had secured a marriage to Gwgon's sister, Angharad. Thus, after the King of Seisyllwg's death, Rhodri's second son, Cadell ap Rhodri would become ruler of that Kingdom by virtue of his mother's blood, and become a vassal to his father. Dynastic politics in medieval Wales was as sophisticated and complex as anywhere else in Europe, and establishing a proper pedigree among the ancient families of the Celtic Britons was essential to success, something Rhodri Mawr understood well, and exploited to his benefit. This latest territorial expansion once more coincided with yet another wave of Viking aggression, and in the same year Rhodri vassalized Seisyllwg, he won two further battles against an invading Danish horde on the isle of Anglesey. However, in 877, the Vikings returned with a large army, evidently overrunning Gwynedd and forcing Rhodri to flee to Ireland. Later that year, the Great Heathen Army also overran Wessex, forcing King Alfred to go into hiding in the marshes of Somerset. However, in one of history's more unlikely comebacks, Alfred managed to rally the West Saxon fynds and decisively crush the Northmen at the Battle of Edington in the summer of 878. With the majority of Vikings in Britain focused on the Wessex campaign, Rhodri was able to return from exile and reestablish control over his domain. Unfortunately for him, a decreased Viking presence in central Britain also meant that King Ceolwulf, client ruler of a Mercian rump state under Danish overlordship[7] , was given an opportunity to try and re-establish his predecessors' hegemony over the Wealas across Offa's Dyke. It is here that Rhodri ap Merfyn the Great met his end, perishing in the battle against the Mercians. Upon his demise, the first great Merfynion's realm was divided among his four sons, although only two would end up being politically relevant: Anarawd ap Rhodri, assuming the Kingship of Gwynedd[8] , and the aforementioned Cadell, King of Seisyllwg. In 881, these brothers, led by Anarawd, once more threw off the hegemony of Mercia, which was itself now under Wessex's overlordship. At the river Conwy, the sons of Rhodri crushed the Mercian Lord Aethelred's armies in a victory that Welsh annals vindictively describe as divinely ordained revenge for the death of their father. Shortly after his victory, Anarawd forged an alliance with the Vikings of Jorvik, presumably as extra insurance against future Mercian aggressions, then turned his focus onto continuing his late father's vision of uniting Wales. However, many other Welsh Kingdoms didn't appreciate the sight of the Anarawd ravenously eyeing their lands. To that end, southern Welsh Kingdoms like Dyfed and Brycheiniog, who had never been under Rhodri's overlordship, gravitated to the court of the rising star that was Alfred of Wessex, accepting West Saxon suzerainty in order to protect themselves from Gwynedd. Ironically, King Anarawd would later abandon his alliance with Jorvik and also became a client to Alfred[9] , thereby putting all of Wales' most influential native rulers within the gravitational orbit of the House of Wessex. Overall, all of this politicking serves to re-illustrate a point from our first episode: that Welsh history was never a binary ethnic struggle between Briton, Saxon, and now also Dane, but a complex web of relationships in which various Welsh rulers were

capable of working both within or beyond cultural lines to preserve the independence and agency of their realms. While the Merfynion of Gwynedd busied themselves with uniting the Britons of Wales proper, further north, their wayward kinsmen in the Kingdom of Alt Clut thrived. Sharing extremely close cultural ties to their sister-peoples in Wales proper, Alt Clut was the last independent remnant of Yr Hen Ogledd, the Welsh of the Old North.[10] It was a small but prosperous maritime Kingdom, named for the titular coastal fortress town of Alt Clut, known in English as Dumbarton Rock. This fortress, which served as the seat of the Northern Welsh Kings, was nigh impregnable, with an alliance of Northumbrians and Picts having failed to take it back in 756. However, during the reign of King Arthgal ap Dyfnwal, Alt Clut would face a new foe. In the year 870 AD, the mighty Norse warlord Ivar the Boneless, having conquered the Northumbrian capital of York and ravaged the lands of the Picts in previous years, set his sights on the fortress of Alt Clut. [11] Ivar was joined by his brother Olafr, King of Dublin, and together they brought their might to bear upon Dumbarton Rock. King Arthgal resisted valiantly, holding out for an unprecedented four months, one of the longest sieges of the era. However, the Vikings eventually cracked the nut, and Alt Clut fell, its people massacred or sold into slavery. The fall of Dumbarton Rock was not the end of the independence of the northern Britons, for the Kingdom survived, moving its center of power inland along the Clyde river, near modern day Glasgow. Deprived of its titular fortress, it rebranded itself as the Kingdom of Strathclyde. [12] Ironically, the presence of the Vikings in northern Britain, which had initially been a fiery plague upon the northern Welsh, soon turned into one of their greatest political assets. From 875 onwards, the Kings of Strathclyde appear to have established long-term friendly relationships with the Norse rulers of Dublin and Jorvik. Because of this, Strathclyde was able to expand its borders greatly, having reached as far south as Penrith by 927 AD. Much of this expansion was at the expense of the greatly weakened and Viking-overrun Kingdom of Northumbria. In that sense, the Strathclyde Britons were taking advantage of the Danish invasions of Anglo-Saxon territory to reconquer land taken from the Celtic Kings of Yr Hen Ogledd centuries ago. [13] Let us now shift the focus of our story back onto the Merfynion, for as Strathclyde thrived in the north, in the southwest of Wales proper, a grandson of Rhodri was poised to surpass his grandfather's legacy. Hywel ap Cadell, known to history as Hywel Dda, or Hywel the Good, was the son of Cadell ap Rhodri, the King of Seisyllwg. Towards the end of his life around 904 AD, Cadell conquered the neighbouring statelet of Dyfed[14], installing his son Hywel as King there. In 920, after assuming sole possession of the throne, Hywel united the realms of Dyfed and Seisyllwg into one Kingdom, Deheubarth. In 928, Hywel went on a pilgrimage to Rome. He was not the first Welsh King to undergo this journey, but he was the first one to return home alive. Around this time, the Merfynion monarch also devoted himself to what would become the keystone of his legacy: the Cyfraith Hywel, or "Laws of Hywel." Before Hywel's reign, Welsh law was a jumble of regional customs passed down orally through the poems of Bards. Attempting a Justinian-esque standardization of this eclectic mess of ancient Celtic traditions was a monumental feat, yet it was accomplished nonetheless. Beyond this, Hywel is also the only Welsh King known to have minted his own coins. From a geopolitical point of view, the reign of Hywel Dda marked a turning point for the Welsh, for it was during the King of Deheubarth's lifetime that the Celtic Britons would, for the first time in history, have to contend with a united Kingdom of the English. After the triumph of King Alfred over the Great Heathen Army, his descendants in the House of Wessex had continued what he had started. Throughout the 910s, Alfred's son, Edward

the Elder, and his daughter, Æthelflæd the Lady of Mercia, succeeded in pushing the Danes out of Viking Mercia and East Anglia. Upon Edward's death in 924, he was succeeded by his son, Æthelstan, who achieved overlordship over the Vikings of Jorvik in 927, thereby bringing Northumbria back under Anglo-Saxon rule. With the four great Anglo-Saxon domains of Wessex now united, a new Kingdom was formed, which for the rest of history, would be the dominant titan of the British Isles. For the entirety of his reign, Hywel Dda willingly accepted a junior, tributary relationship with the English crown. In 926, he supplicated himself before King Athelstan, and thereafter was known to be a fairly regular guest at the court of Wessex. Playing the sycophant to the English may have been a dent on Hywel's Cumbric pride, but it is clear that the good King was a realist, recognizing who the powerhouse in Britain was now, and that there was more to gain by being England's friend than England's enemy.[15] Not everyone was happy with Hywel's appeasement of the English, which we can see in the Welsh literature of the age. The *Armes Prydein*, or 'prophecy of Britain', is a famous piece of heroic poetry that claimed to foresee a future in which all the non-English peoples of Britain, including the Scots, the Irish, the Norsemen, and the Britons of Cornwall, Wales and Strathclyde would come together in a coalition and push the Anglo-Saxons back into the sea. The *Armes Prydein* was no doubt written during Hywel Dda's reign, and was an explicit criticism of the Welsh King's policy of peaceful pragmatism with the English. Hywel would never buy into such romantic visions of past Celtic glory. Infact, in 934 AD, he, alongside other Welsh Kings, had even joined Athelstan in a campaign to help the English subdue the Scots and their Brittonic kinsmen in Strathclyde. Hywel's pro-English policies bore him fruit in 942, when Idwal ap Anarawd, King of Gwynedd and Hywel's cousin, grew fed up with being under the English thumb, started a rebellion, and launched an attack on the English. Predictably, Idwal was killed in action. He left behind two sons, Iago and Ieuaf, but before either could inherit the throne, Hywel swept in, forcing them into exile, and seizing the northern Kingdom for himself.[16] This made Hywel Dda the King of all Wales except Gwent and Morgannwg, something which the newly crowned king Edmund of England did not challenge, likely due to Hywel's long-standing friendliness to the English throne. In 950, Hywel the Good passed away, and upon his death, his united realm collapsed into dynastic warfare. In the north, the sons of Idwal returned from exile and reclaimed Gwynedd, waging war on Hywel's sons, Owain, Rhodri, and Edwin, who retained power in Deheubarth. Let us now turn our attention northwards once more. Back in 937, King Owain ap Dyfnwal of Strathclyde, responding to the imperialist aggressions of King Athelstan in the north of England, entered into an alliance with King Olaf Guthfrithson, the Viking King of Dublin, and Constantine II, King of Alba, an early form of Scotland. This was the closest thing to the anti-Saxon coalition dreamed up in the *Armes Prydain*. However, rather than sweeping the English back into the sea, this alliance of Norsemen and Celts was crushed at the battle of Brunanburh. The disaster at Brunanburh did not spell the immediate end of Strathclyde, but it did mean that, for the next century, the northern Britons would find themselves increasingly hemmed in between two growing powers, the Scots of Alba, and the English. Over the next few decades, Strathclyde came increasingly under the sway of the Gaelic Kings of Scotland, and, sometime between 1018 to 1054, the last remnant of Yr Hen Ogledd had been annexed into the Scottish crown or the English lords of Northumbria. After the fall of Strathclyde, where Brythonic chieftains had once ruled throughout all of Britain, now only among the squabbling petty kingdoms of Wales proper did the Cymric peoples retain their independence. In the following centuries, even

those domains would come under threat, as in 1066, a bastard from Normandy defeated the Saxon King Harold Godwinson in a place called Hastings, and the course of British history was once again forever altered. In the year 1039, twenty-seven years before the coming of the Normans, a man named Gruffydd ap Llywelyn assumed the Kingship of Gwynedd. In the first five years of his reign, he managed to crush the Earl Leofric of Mercia's armies at Welshpool[1] , subjugated the Kingdom of Deheubarth, and defeated a fleet of Viking marauders at the bay of Pwlldyfach. Gruffydd's relationship with the various Gaelicized Vikings on the Irish Sea was fluid, for in 1052, he allied with a large Hiberno-Norse fleet and raided the English border county of Herefordshire. Gruffydd of Gwynedd was able to get away with his brazen aggressions on English territory by playing the powerful lord of England off one another, raiding some, but forging important alliances with others, such as with Ælfgar, the Lord of Mercia.[2] With the help of Ælfgar, he brutally subdued rebellions in Deheubarth and conquered Morgannwg. In doing so, the King of Gwynedd united all of Wales, the first monarch to ever do so.[3] However, this grand unification would prove ephemeral. When Gruffydd's ally, the Lord of Mercia, died in 1062, Gruffydd was left in a vulnerable position. That same year, a certain Harold Godwinson, Earl of East Anglia and Hereford, launched a huge offensive into Wales, overrunning the country. A year later, Gruffydd's household, likely bribed by Harold, turned on their King, killing him. Had Gruffydd ap Llywelyn reigned for longer, then perhaps Wales would have crystallized into a more permanent state of unification, much like England and Scotland had in the previous century. However, this was not to be, and his death instead heralded a return to form, with Wales splitting along its traditional boundaries once more. Cruising on the glories of his successes in Wales, Harold Godwinson was chosen by the Saxon Witenagemot to be King of England after the death of his half-brother, Edward the Confessor. This reign would not last out the year, for in October of 1066, the Saxon warrior-ruler was slain in battle by a rival claimant to the throne, William, Duke of Normandy. Thus, centuries of Anglo-Saxon rule in England was brought to an end. Thereafter, the most powerful Kingdom in the British Isles would be dominated by the Normans: a French-speaking aristocracy.[4] Shortly after his ascension, William of Conqueror, now William I of England, established new earldoms in Hereford, Shrewsbury and Chester, and appointed them to hardened Norman Knights who he entrusted with guarding the Welsh border.[5] At the time, Wales was divided principally between Gwynedd, Powys, Deheubarth and Morgannwg. During William's reign, the border was relatively stable, and several Welsh kings, like Rhys ap Tewdwr of Deheubarth, entered into tributary relationships with the Anglo-Norman King. This, however, did not stop some ambitious Norman adventurers from thundering into Wales anyways. In 1072, the intrepid knight-errant Robert of Rhuddlan seized the easternmost portion of Gwynedd and erected a castle there, establishing himself as a local overlord. In general, Norman knights were a notoriously bellicose lot, and Wales represented a fresh new frontier of land and wealth. From 1088 onwards, the Lord of Herefordshire, Bernard de Neufmarché, began ingressing into the territory of Brycheiniog. This provoked a fierce retaliation from King Rhys ap Tewdwr, but he was slain by Neufmarché's mounted knights in a battle at Aberhonddu in 1093. Rhys' death meant that Deheubarth was now vulnerable, and sure enough, the Lord of Shrewsbury soon overran it. Meanwhile, Robert of Rhuddlan had long since seized control of all of Gwynedd. In just a few years of ingress, the marcher lords seemed poised to conquer all of Wales.[6] The Cymri, however, would soon make the Normans pay bitterly for their trespasses. Back in 1055, a child of Princely stock was born. Gruffudd ap Cynan was a descendant of Rhodri Mawr, but he was also

an exile, having been born across the sea from his ancestral homeland, in the Norse-Gaelic town of Dublin. [7] After an initial failed attempt in 1075, Gruffydd managed to seize the throne of Gwynedd in 1081. However, he would not enjoy his crown for long, for soon after, Robert of Rhuddlan conspired with several other Norman marcher lords to lure the new King of Gwynedd into a diplomatic meeting, only to treacherously imprison him. Thereafter, Robert of Rhuddlan became the foreign overlord of all Gwynedd, building Norman-style Motte and Bailey castles throughout the region, all while the rest of Wales was being overrun by other Norman marcher lords. If the traditional account is to be believed, then in 1093, after a decade of captivity, Cynan escaped his Norman captors, and on July 3rd of that year, killed Robert of Rhuddlan in a Skirmish on the limestone shores of the Great Orme. After this, Hugh ‘le Gros’ d’Avranches, Earl of Chester, became Gwynedd’s new foreign overlord. [8] That same year, the fire of rebellion erupted across all of the land of the Cymri. In southern Wales, King Cadwgan ap Bleddyn of Powys spearheaded a lightning campaign that saw his warband tear through Deheubarth unopposed. Simultaneously, the Britons of Gwynedd erupted into open revolt, allowing Gruffydd ap Cynan to throw Hugh of Chester out on his rump, and for the third time, reclaim his rightful throne. From there, he joined forces with Cadwgan, and together with the King of Powys, became a leading figure in the Welsh insurrection. To help his Marcher Lords subdue this rebellion, the King of England led two major expeditions into Wales in 1095 and 1097, but the Kings of Powys and Gwynedd wisely avoided direct battle with this royal army. Unable to feed and pay his men indefinitely, William was forced to depart both times, having accomplished little to nothing. Meanwhile, two other Norman armies were ambushed and annihilated by the Celtic Britons in two battles at Gelli Tarfawg, in Gwent, and Aberllech, in Brycheiniog. The tides began to turn in 1098, when the forces of Cadwgan and Cynan failed to take Castle Pembroke.[9] From this fortress, the Norman marcher lords found a second wind when Earl Hugh of Chester and Earl Hugh of Shrewsbury joined their forces and pushed the Kings of Powys and Gwynedd all the way up to the isle of Anglesey. In this, the Normans were aided by an influential Welsh noble, Owain ab Edwin. [10] The rebel Kings hired a fleet of Irish Vikings to push back against the two Hughs, however, the Normans simply bribed these Vikings to switch sides, and in doing so, forced Cynan to go into exile again after losing Gwynedd for the third time. However, in one of medieval history’s more notable deus ex machinas, Magnus Bareleg, King of Norway, happened to be sailing through the Irish Sea with his fleet at the time.[11] For whatever reason, he clashed with the Normans off Anglesey, defeating them in a battle where Hugh of Shrewsbury was slain. Due to this, the Kings of Powys and Gwynedd were able to return from exile and drive the Normans out of Northern Wales. By 1099 it was clear, as things stood, that neither side had quite the combination of resources and strategy to completely subdue the other. So both Cynan and Cadwgan sat down for peace talks with representatives of King William II, son of William the Conqueror. In the following proceedings, the crown of England and the Marcher Lords recognized Gruffydd ap Cynan as the rightful King of Gwynedd and confirmed Cadwgan ap Bleddyn as the legitimate ruler of Powys and Ceredigion. However, much of southern Wales would remain under the rule of Norman Lordships. For the next two hundred years, while Southern Wales remained under Norman domination, northern Wales would remain a center of Briton independence, and the border between these two spheres would become known as the Welsh Marches. Let us now take a break from the march of history, and look at a broader picture of what politics, warfare, and culture looked like in Wales during this time. Contrary to the picture we have thus far painted, life in the Welsh

Kingdoms during the high middle ages was not just a raw struggle for survival. Despite the perpetual threat of the Normans, the Briton Kingdoms were experiencing a literary renaissance. In the timeline of Welsh poetry, the years between 1100 and 1300 AD are known as Beirdd y Tywysogion: the Poets of the Princes. During this time, Bards commanded a position of extreme respect in Welsh society, and Briton Kings would have a bardd teulu: a household poet. Occupying a prestigious seat on the King's royal court, it was the bardd teulu's duty to sing to the King's troops before they headed off into battle, as well as to sing privately for the Queen. Perhaps the most famous bardd teulu was Meilyr Brydydd, court poet of none other than King Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd. [12] Welsh Kings in this era were also known to sponsor bardic schools, where ancient lyrical traditions were made accessible to more people than ever before. These schools were run by pencerdd: chief musicians, who sat in an honoured position next to the King's heir in the royal court. The incredibly dense corpus of Welsh-language literature and poetry from the 11th to 13th century which survives to this day proves that, despite the constant threats to their independence, the Kingdoms of the Celtic Britons were among the most educated and culturally sophisticated peoples of the high middle ages.[13] Nevertheless, the shadow of the English Crown still loomed over them, and as such, they were also highly militarized societies, whose foreign policy revolved around a volatile relationship with the foreign commandants who occupied the southern half of their peoples' homeland. Over two centuries, the number of Norman lordships in Wales, the noble families which ruled over them, and the total amount of Welsh territory they controlled would all fluctuate. However, they all shared the same characteristics. For one thing, the Norman Lords in southern Wales were practically independent rulers. Although they owed nominal fealty to the crown of England, they were granted many privileges that their counterparts in England did not have, such as exemption from royal taxation and the right to pass their own laws.[14] Most importantly, Norman marcher lords had the right to build their own castles, a jealously guarded privilege which the English Crown was incredibly hesitant to afford to its vassals in England. The reason for this was that castles were the Norman's favoured method of establishing dominance in the lands they conquered. In England itself, the English Kings saw little need to allow his vassals to build too many castles, for it would empower them and risk rebellion. Moreover, since the Anglo-Saxon peoples had already been thoroughly tamed, there was little need for them. However, in the Welsh frontier, where the local Celtic Britons were still wild and defiant, the English Crown allowed their frontier lords to have a freer hand. To this day, modern Wales still has the highest concentration of castles of anywhere in Europe, a testament to how many fortifications the Normans had to erect to fully subdue the native Britons.[15] It should also be noted that, in the parts of Wales ruled by Norman lords, the linguistic and ethnic makeup was still composed of a predominantly rural, Welsh speaking peasantry. Granted, King Henry I did encourage the migration of Breton, Flemish and English settlers into Southern Wales, who tended to cluster around Norman castles. To this day, many of Wales' largest cities, such as Cardiff and Swansea, were originally settlements built up around the site of a Norman marcher lord's fortress. The relationship between the Norman Lordships and the Native Kingdoms in Wales was, at best, capricious. Often, there were long periods of peace and stability, usually secured with political marriages between Norman nobles and Welsh royalty. As a result, many prominent Norman marcher families, like the Mortimers, de Lacys and Talbots, acquired a heavy quantum of Briton blood, and after a few generations, the conflict the Kings of Wales fought against the Norman occupiers was less a struggle against an alien entity,

but moreso a dynastic struggle against their own extended families. For indeed, despite frequent alliances forged from politically advantageous marriages, war was still a fact of life on the Welsh frontier. In this, the Normans were among the deadliest foe the Britons ever faced. Possessed of arguably the best shock cavalry in the world, the Normans in the 11th century had smashed the armies of Saxon Kings, Italian Lords, Arab Emirs, and even the mighty Eastern Roman Emperor. Thus, it is all the more impressive that the Welsh, a small, rural people on the very fringe of Europe, were able to resist the Norman juggernaut for over 200 years. In the early years of the march, the Welsh were unable to go toe to toe with the better equipped Normans in the open field. To compensate for this, the Britons tended to avoid open battle with the conquerors. Instead, they hid in the rugged hills, using avoision to lure Norman armies deep into their territory before harassing them with guerrilla tactics and annihilating them via ambush. Norman castles proved another significant challenge, but Welsh warriors were deadly lightning raiders, who could plunder and pillage the hinterlands around such fortifications with remarkable efficiency, and retreat back into the hills before the Norman force within could be mustered to confront them.^[16] After all, what use was having a castle to sit in if you were helpless to defend the lands around it? After a few decades of on-and-off fighting, some Welsh kings began to adopt Norman style warfare, managing to field Norman-style cavalry and build Norman-style castles in their domains. This cultural transaction went both ways, as the Welsh were highly renowned archers, and it is often argued that the Welsh Bow inspired the creation of the English Longbow, which in later centuries would decide the fate of some of Medieval Europe's most famous battles, like Agincourt and Crecy. In the year 1136, while campaigning in Normandy, King Henry I died without any male heirs. As a succession crisis threatened to grip the Kingdom of England, the Marcher Lords turned the majority of their troops eastwards. With the Norman presence in Wales suddenly reduced, fierce rebellions quickly erupted across nearly all of the southern occupied territories. By now, King Gruffudd ap Cynan, nearly 80 years old, was well past his prime. However, his sons, Owain and Cadwaladr, had since matured into fearsome and capable warriors. Riding south, the two Princes of Gwynedd linked up with King Gruffydd ap Rhys of Deheubarth. At a place called Crug Mawr, near the Castle of Cardigan, the Welsh army, now some 6,000 strong, met an equally large force of Flemish and Norman soldiers led by Robert Fitzmartin, Lord of Cemais. In the following battle, the Britons utterly annihilated the occupiers, reportedly slaying over 3,000 men, an astronomical killcount for the era. [17] Following this stunning victory, the region of Ceredigion, occupied at some point in the early 12th century, was liberated from Norman rule, and annexed into the territory of Gwynedd. Ultimately, great Welsh victories like that at Crug Mawr, in hindsight, represented a delaying of the inevitable, as the interminable advance of the Anglo-Normans would ultimately continue until all of Wales was under English rule. Despite this, it would take another 150 years to fully accomplish this, and for every inch of Welsh land taken, the Celtic Britons would make the invaders pay with a quart of blood. In 1137, the ancient King Gruffudd ap Cynan of Gwynedd passed away at the age of 82, and would be remembered for his leading role in Wales' largely successful resistance against the first wave of Norman colonization. Gruffudd would be succeeded by his son: Owain ap Gruffudd, who history remembers as Owain Gwynedd.^[1] Owain ascended to the throne at an extremely opportune time: Back in 1120, the King Henry I's only son and legitimate heir, William Adelin, had drowned at sea alongside many of England's most prominent nobles. [2] Thus, when Henry I died in 1136, a full blown civil war had erupted between Princess Matilda, who

despite being the late King's only surviving child, was a woman, and Stephen of Blois, who despite only being a nephew to the King, was a man. [3] As the Knights and levies of England turned on each other, the Britons took the opportunity to continue their onslaught against the Anglo-Norman marcher lords occupying their territory. In Powys, King Madog ap Maredudd destroyed the Norman stronghold of Bromfield. Meanwhile, Owain's sons, Hywel and Cynan, had come into their own as capable warriors, ravaging Cardigan in 1145, then helping the Princes of Deheubarth take the castle of Dinefwr before overrunning Carmarthen, then pushing on to Dyfed, conquering the Flemish colony of Wiston Castle. Concurrently, King Owain himself stabbed east, capturing Mold Castle in 1146, before securing the whole of Rhuddlan in 1150. During these early stages of his reign, Owain Gwynedd became the most influential ruler in Wales, maintaining a position of prestige over the other native princes, while keeping the scrambling marcher lords on the perpetual back foot. However, Owain's reign, like so many other great Welsh rulers, was still plagued by conflict with his kin and countrymen. In particular, Owain feuded with King Madog of Powys over the region of Iâl. In an attempt to stave off Gwynedd's expansion, Madog allied with the marcher lord Earl Ranulf of Chester and met Owain in a battle at Coleshill. In this clash, Owain was victorious. However, these triumphs were overshadowed by a looming threat from the east, for in England, the anarchy was over, and in 1157, a new King, Henry Plantagenet, set his sights on bringing the unruly Welsh to heel. Before moving against Gwynedd, King Henry II sought native allies, and found them in King Madog of Powys. With significant Welsh support attached to his cause, Henry invaded Owain's domain. [4] Despite the seemingly overwhelming gulf in manpower, the King of Gwynedd prepared for war. Utilizing the tactics which had worked for his forebears, Owain set up an ambush in the forests of Ewloe, where he fell upon Henry's royal army by surprise, scoring a decisive victory and coming within a hair's width of capturing the English King himself. With this Owain likely prevented his own deposition. However, he recognized that he lacked the resources to maintain a prolonged struggle against an England which had both a strong King on its throne and allies in Powys. To that end, swore nominal fealty to King Henry, surrendering his conquests in Rhuddlan to the Norman marcher lord, Hugh of Beauchamp. [5] For a time, King Gwynedd took his lumps and played the waiting game. Soon, the geopolitical climate shifted back in his favour: in 1160, his bitter rival King Madog died, followed by his heir Llewelyn ap Madog. This caused Powys to shatter, as rival claimants carved that ancient Kingdom in twain. Furthermore, by 1163, King Henry had become embroiled in a feud with the most important religious figure in Britain: Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury. This caused division in loyalties across the realm, and significantly weakened royal control in England. Before long, Owain joined forces with Rhys ap Gruffudd of Deheubarth and reignited hostilities against the Plantagenet crown. Soon, almost all of Wales' smaller native rulers, including the fractured statelets of Powys, joined in. In 1165, Henry led another expedition into Wales, but he was unable to compel the Britons into a pitched battle, and eventually had to retreat without having brought the Welsh to heel. Because of this, Owain was able to raise Basingwerk castle to the ground, and recapture the whole of Rhuddlan. [6] The final years of Owain Gwynedd's life were spent quarreling with the aforementioned Thomas Beckett over the dependence of Welsh bishoprics on the direction of the Archbishop of Canterbury: which ended up with Owain being excommunicated by the Pope.[7] However, this did not dent his reputation among his subjects. King Owain passed away in 1170, at the age of 70. He is remembered as one of the most successful warrior-monarchs of Cymru, who, like his father before

him, played a leading role in reconquering land lost to the invaders, and ensuring that Welsh independence would continue for another generation. After the death of Owain Gwynedd, the Kingdom of Deheubarth became the dominant native power in Wales, with its monarch, Rhys ap Gruffydd, turning his realm into a bulwark against both the royal armies of the English crown and the southern marcher lords. However, when Rhys died in 1197, a civil war broke out between his two sons, Maelgwn and Gruffydd, which was never resolved.[8] Deheubarth was permanently sundered, a blow to native Welsh power in the south. Meanwhile, in the north, Gwynedd was once more ready to take its place as greatest Kingdom among the Cymru, as a new King ascended its throne. Llywelyn ab Iorwerth was born in 1173, three years after the death of his grandfather, Owain Gwynedd. As a young man, he gathered enough support to displace two of his uncles, who had been feuding over Gwynedd since Owain's passing. By 1199, the son of Iorwerth became the undisputed hegemon of the northern Kingdom. Meanwhile in England, a new King, John I ascended the throne. John had an intimate knowledge of internal Welsh politics, having served as the acting marcher lord of Glamorgan in his youth. At the onset of Llywelyn's reign, volatile tensions had developed between Gwynedd and one of the Powys rump states, Powys Wenwynwyn. Due to his experience in Brittonic affairs, King John was able to play both rivals against each other.[9] Thus, at the onset of his reign, Llywelyn was stuck needing to brown-nose the Plantagenet throne to get anywhere. He did it well, and by 1204, he had secured a marriage to King John's daughter, Lady Joan. This union increased Llywelyn's prestige considerably, and was invaluable in making Gwynedd the most favoured of King John's nominal Welsh vassals. So much so that King John fell out entirely with Wenwynwyn ap Owain in 1208, allowing Llywelyn to sweep in with his teulu and annex the lands of his longstanding rival. [10] However, the peachy-keen bromance between Llywelyn and John would not last long. As Llywelyn's power grew, John grew increasingly wary of his ostensible friend and ally. In 1211, the King of England invaded Gwynedd, supported by almost all the other native Welsh princes, who were likely trepidatious over Llywelyn's growing influence over them. This campaign took Llywelyn completely by surprise, and although he avoided deposition due to the intervention of his wife Joan, he still had to concede to John, submitting to a heavy yearly tribute, handing over his own son Gruffydd as a hostage, and surrendering all his lands east of the river Conwy to English control. King John's success in Wales was short lived. Before long, he began overexerting his royal authority over his Welsh vassals[11], and thus, Llywelyn went from a loathsome hegemon the Welsh wanted to escape, to a hero they had to rally around. Subsequently, the various leaders of fractured Powys and Deheubarth formed an alliance with Gwynedd, and entered into open rebellion against John. In this, they found a distant, yet powerful ally. Pope Innocent III had been quarreling with the King of England for several years, and used his spiritual authority to release all the Welsh princes from any oaths of loyalty they had sworn from John. By 1212, Llywelyn had reconquered the eastern half of Gwynedd. Soon after, he forged an alliance with King Philip Augustus of France. [12] In dealing with esteemed foreign dignitaries from Paris to Rome, the Welsh proved that they were more than just tribal holdouts at the edge of Europe, but sophisticated diplomats, able to attune to the political pulse of all Christendom. While Llywelyn's star was ever rising, John's situation was growing increasingly precarious. In 1215, a coalition of the most powerful barons in England rose up against him, and forced him to sign a little old document known as the Magna Carta.[13] Another beneficiary to this signing was Llywelyn and his allies, who had tacitly supported the Barons in their rebellion. As such, provisions 56 and 57 of the Magna Carta

stipulated that King John had to restore any lands he had seized from the Welsh princes in 1211 back to their rightful owners, and that Llywelyn's son Gruffydd would be released from his captivity. King John died in 1216, succeeded by his nine year old son, Henry III. In 1218, the throne of Gwynedd signed the treaty of Worcester with the throne of England[14] , which confirmed all of Llywelyn's territorial gains, and brought hostilities between the two parties to an end. By this time, the King of Gwynedd had established himself as the leader of all of Wales' native leaders, and for the next 22 years, would be the undisputed top dog in Cymru. Other than some of the usual mix of intermarriage, diplomacy and sparse warfare with the marcher lords, the rest of Llywelyn ap Iorwerth's reign was marked with relative stability. He passed away in 1240 at the age of 67, and would forever after be remembered as Llywelyn the Great, the only other Welsh leader to earn that title since the bygone days of Rhodri Mawr. The united realm Llywelyn ap Iorwerth built did not survive his death. One year into the reign of his son, Dafydd, King Henry III took advantage of Gwynedd's new and uncontested ruler and invaded Northern Wales. Unprepared for this, Dafydd swore fealty to the English throne and relinquished all of Gwynedd's land gains and vassals acquired during his father's reign. In 1244, Dafydd sought protection from England by appealing to the Pope to become Gwynedd's temporal overlord. [15] This failed, however, and in reprisal, Henry III launched another invasion. Dafydd died in 1245 with no true heirs. Perhaps the most notable part of his legacy is that he was the first native Welsh ruler to style himself as "Prince", instead of "King", recognizing the reality of the junior relationship that the Welsh monarchs had to the English throne. After Dafydd's death, the throne of Gwynedd would be contested by two of his nephews, Owain ap Gruffydd and Llywelyn ap Gruffydd.[16] However, internecine conflict would have to wait, for Henry III was still baring down on them. Lacking manpower, resources, and the support of the other Welsh princes, Owain and Llywelyn ultimately sued for peace in the 1247 treaty of Woodstock, whose terms were particularly humiliating: not only did Gwynedd once more have to cede all its land east of the river Conwy, its two Princes were reduced to the status of tenants-in-chief, whose right to rule derived directly from the English crown, rather than sovereign rulers in their own regard.[17] In 1255, civil war erupted between Llywelyn and Owain over a dispute regarding the land inheritance of their younger brother, Dafydd. At the battle of Bryn Derwin, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd emerged victorious in this conflict, becoming sole ruler of Gwynedd. During the first half of his undisputed reign, the second great Llywelyn transformed Gwynedd from a disgraced rump state back into the dauntless speartip of native Welsh resistance. Back in 1251, he had made an alliance with Maredudd ap Owain and Maredudd ap Rhys Gryg, two powerful lords of sundered Deheubarth. In 1256, these allies prowled past the Conwy and liberated virtually all of eastern Gwynedd from English rule within a week. [18] Throughout 1257, Llywelyn cleaved southwards, displacing not just Anglo-Norman landholders, but many native Welsh rulers who were content in their oaths of loyalty to the English crown. That same year, Stephan Bauzin, a landowning knight in the Marcher Lordship of Glamorgan, was charged with leading a royal army of English, Gascon and southern Welsh soldiers to subdue Llywelyn's rabble rousing. This expedition would end in disaster. At the battle of Cadfan, Llywelyn's Deheubarth allies, who had since become his vassals, would inflict a crushing defeat on Bauzin's host.[19] After this, virtually all the native rulers of Cymri swore fealty to the son of Gruffydd, and it was around then that he began styling himself as the Prince of all Wales. While Llywelyn dismantled English authority throughout Wales, Henry was in no position to respond. Under the leadership of Simon de Montfort, earl of Leicester, many of England's

most powerful Barons had risen up against their King in a bid to curb royal authority and increase their own privileges. Taking advantage of this, Llywelyn forged an alliance with de Montfort in 1263, sending his army to help besiege the pro-Henry castle of Bridgenorth, and ravaging the pro-Henry borderlands of Herefordshire and Shropshire [20] Although de Montfort was killed in battle in September of 1265, England was still in political chaos. Faced with the daunting task of restoring order to his Kingdom, Henry opted to avoid further confrontation with Llywelyn, and in 1267, the treaty of Montgomery was signed, in which the English crown acknowledged Llywelyn's land gains, recognized him as the Prince of Wales, and confirmed him as the rightful overlord of all the native Welsh rulers. The year 1267 marked the zenith of Llywelyn's power, but the foundation it was built on would soon crumble away. Peace between England and Llywelyn's Wales was short lived. By 1270, the Prince of Cymru had already begun feuding with Marcher earl of Gloucester over who had the right of overlordship over the native Welsh landowners in Glamorgan. This escalated into Llywelyn burning down the Earl's castle at Caerffili. Two terms of the treaty of Montgomery had been that, in return for being recognized as overlord of native Wales, Llywelyn would swear nominal fealty to the English crown and pay it 25,000 pounds. The Prince now refused to do either of these things, citing the crown's failure to mediate between himself and the marcher lords as the reason why. As tensions between Llywelyn and England mounted, his enemies closer to home took the opportunity to pounce. In 1274, the Prince's brother Dafydd, still resentful of being deprived of his rightful lands, conspired alongside Gruffydd ap Gwenwynwyn, the Prince of southern Powys, to assassinate Llywelyn. This plot was thwarted, but before Llywelyn could catch the two conspirators, they fled to England for sanctuary. By 1274, a new monarch, the dynamic Edward "Longshanks" I, had ascended to the English throne. Despite repeated attempts by the new King to get Llywelyn to pay homage to him and pay him the money stipulated in the treaty of Montgomery, the Prince of Wales refused, citing Edward's failure to hand over Gwenwynwyn and Dafydd as his legal justification for doing so. In the end, Llywelyn ap Gruffydd's defiance would be his downfall. In 1276, talks broke down, and in November of that year, King Edward launched a massive invasion of Wales. This time, there were no civil wars or religious schisms which would save Cymru from feeling the full might of the English army. Edward himself was an exceedingly capable military commander, having previously fought in the Holy Land on crusade.[21] While an English fleet choked off Llywelyn's crucial breadbasket of Anglesey, three royal armies marched into Wales from Montgomery, Chester and Carmarthen, cowing the Welsh lords who had previously sworn fealty to Llywelyn to realign their allegiance to Edward. In 1277, Llywelyn was forced to sue for peace, signing the treaty of Aberconwy, which reduced him back to where he'd been after Woodstock in 1246, with all of his vassals lost, and Gwynedd east of the Conwy ceded to the English crown. In 1282, Llywelyn was afforded one final chance to regain his lost holdings. By then, many of the lesser princes who had supported Edward against Llywelyn in 1277 were becoming disillusioned with the exactions of the royal officers in their lands, and when tensions reached a boiling point, they rose in revolt. The orchestrator of this rebellion was none other than Dafydd, Llywelyn's brother and would-be assassin. Despite their checkered past, the two joined forces to throw off the English yoke. Edward responded in kind, and although his forces were able to once more seize Anglesey by sea, Llywelyn won a victory over him at the battle of Moel-y-don. Here, the Archbishop of Canterbury stepped in to mediate between Edward and Llywelyn, and managed to secure the Prince the promise of a large and comfortable estate in England, if only he gave up his claim to Wales. Llywelyn's reply was pithy: "The prince is no

way bound to forgo his heritage and that of his forebears from the time of Brutus, and accept lands in England where language, manners, laws and customs are foreign to him.” The message was clear: Llywelyn’s place was in Wales, where his ancestors had ruled since the time of the Caesars. Ultimately, these impassioned words would become the final eulogy of a martyr, for at the battle of Orewin Bridge on the 11th of December, 1282, he was separated from his army by trickery, and slain. [22] Following the demise of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, the morale of the rebels collapsed, and Edward overran the whole of Wales. Gwynedd was annexed, and all symbols of its statehood were erased, with all of its royal insignia, relics, and regalia removed.[23] For nearly a thousand years, the Cymri had held the line against countless invaders: be they Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Gaels, Danes or Normans, and although territory had been lost and Kingdoms conquered over the centuries, always had some form of Brittonic independence survived on the isle. After Edward’s conquest in 1282, this was over, and the ancient Kingdoms of the Cymri, whose language, culture and law could be traced back to a time before the Romans were wiped off the map. However, while Welsh statehood had ended, the defiant spirit of the Welsh people had not. In the year 1282, David finally fell to Goliath when Gwynedd, the last independent Welsh Kingdom, was snuffed out by King Edward “Longshanks” I of England. The death of Prince Llywelyn the Last heralded the end of a dynastic line which had survived nearly a millenia of onslaught from Irish, Anglo-Saxon and Viking invaders, and resisted the indomitable Normans, the greatest conquerors of the middle ages, for over 200 years. However, even under foreign occupation, Wales remained a predominantly Welsh land. English settlers formed only small enclaves clustered around castles, little pockets of foreign inhabitation in a countryside otherwise dominated by Welsh-speaking natives, the overwhelming majority of whom barely spoke a word of English. Moreover, while the highest levels of administration were occupied by Englishmen, the lower levels of government remained predominantly Welsh in character. Consequently, under English rule, some Welshmen, known as Uchelwyr, or ‘high men’, retained positions of significant power. As a newly annexed region of the English Kingdom, the men of Wales became a source of manpower for the English King and his wars against Scotland and France. The famed Welsh bow, a weapon which had long rained death upon the invading English, now pointed its bodkin arrowhead at the enemies of the English crown. In 1337, at the battle of Crecy, the flower of French nobility, adorned in shining steel and rainbow heraldry, was cut down nearly to a man by Welshmen wielding longbows. Even under foreign rule, the Cymri held tight to their heritage and their histories. English rule did not disrupt the work of Welsh bards, who continued to perform throughout the land, preserving the lyrical and literary traditions of their dulcet Celtic language. Atop hills and in parish churches, they performed the songs of their ancestors, beguiling rapt assemblies with ancient stories of mighty kings and dauntless heroes and their military triumphs over the ancestors of the English nation. As one might expect, Wales in the 14th century was a country exceptionally prone to rebellion. Major insurrections incited by land-owning Welsh nobles against English rule occurred in 1294, 1316, and 1372. Each of these extracted a heavy blood price from the occupiers, but ultimately, each one was put down. However, all of these conflicts paled in scope and passion to the revolt which would erupt as the 15th century drew its first breath.

Before we launch into this rebellion, let us first introduce its main character. Owain ap Gruffydd, known more commonly as Owain Glyndŵr, was born around the year 1354 to a family of Uchelwyr. His land inheritance was modest, consisting only of three small manorial estates. However, among a people who still treasured the genealogies of

their bygone Kings, Glyndŵr possessed one of the most prestigious pedigrees in Wales, claiming descent from the royal dynasties of not only the Kingdom of Gwynedd, but Powys and Deheubarth as well. According to tradition, he spent much of his youth as a ward of a member of English Parliament, Sir David Hanmer, who sent him to the Inns of Court in London to study as a Lawyer. In 1385, Glyndŵr enlisted in the royal army of King Richard II, where he served as a squire, and likely saw action along the Scottish border and in a naval engagement in the channel against the French and their Flemish allies. The event that instigated Owain Glyndŵr's transformation from a loyal vassal of the English crown into a rebel was a minor property dispute with his neighbour, the Anglo-Norman Marcher Lord, Reynold Grey, Baron of Ruthin Castle. In spring of the year 1400, Baron Gray de Ruthin seized control of a tranche of Glyndŵr's lands. Infuriated, Glyndŵr appealed to the English parliament for restitution, but his case was ignored. Later that year, King Henry IV issued a royal command to vassals to levy feudal troops for a military expedition along the Scottish border. Unfortunately for Glyndŵr, Lord Gray was the man responsible for enforcing these royal demands, and deliberately neglected to inform Glyndŵr of the summons, making it seem like the Welsh lord was a traitor who had refused to carry out an order of the King. Grey then conspired to have Glyndŵr arrested by the King's bailiffs, a trap which the Welshman only narrowly avoided. Glyndŵr, a proud descendant of dynasties that stretched back to the time of the Romans, had spent his life assimilating himself into the high society of the English occupiers in order to hold on to a sliver of the lands that had been his natural birthright. Despite that, recent events had made it clear that no matter how loyal he was to the English monarchy, his hereditary rights and privileges would be trampled over whenever they conflicted with the interests of the colonising Anglo-Norman Marcher Lords. So it was that on September 17th, 1400, Owain Glyndŵr entered into open revolt against the English Crown. Cloaking himself in the symbolism of his ancestors, he adopted the coat of arms once used by Llywelyn ap Gruffyd, the last Prince of Gwynedd. The message was clear: the struggle that had ended 117 years ago, when the last Welsh Kingdom had fallen to England's armies, was now reignited. Cymru would be free once more.

In the first five days of his revolt, Glyndŵr struck out like a lightning bolt. His forces quickly overran much of northern Wales, including the town Ruthin, the seat of his hated rival Lord Gray. Initially, Glyndŵr and his band of freedom fighters encountered little armed resistance due most of the English army being off in Scotland on the expedition that Lord Gray had insidiously excluded Glyndŵr from. However, when King Henry received news of the revolt, he immediately paused his slap-fight with the Scots and be-lined it south. Soon, the King had arrived in Wales, parading around the country with a large royal army. This forced Glyndŵr and his followers into hiding, and successfully compelled many Welsh Uchelwyr back into obedience. After that, it seemed like the rebellion had been smothered in the cradle, a false start to a false hope. Patting himself on the back for a job well done, King Henry disbanded his expedition force and left Wales. Unbeknownst to him, the flames of rebellion had not yet been fully doused. On Good Friday of 1401, two of Owain's cousins, the brothers Rhys and Gwilym ap Tudur, snuck into the impregnable Conwy Castle disguised as common carpenters. Once inside, they assassinated the watchmen on duty, allowing a small warband to rush in and take control of the whole citadel. This was the spark that reignited the rebellion. Throughout the rest of 1401, the situation in Wales spiraled dismally out of the English Crown's control. Throughout the country, armed warbands rose spontaneously on every mountain, from where they struck down at English castles and towns with furious catharsis, while Welsh

students in Oxford and Cambridge Universities abandoned their classes to return home and join the cause. Opting to respond with the stick over the carrot, English parliament passed a series of discriminatory acts in 1401 and 1402 aimed both to suppress and punish the rebels. These new laws forbade Welshmen from baring arms, buying property in English boroughs, holding public office, and forming public assemblies. ‘Wasters, rhymers, minstrels and vagabonds’ were also outlawed, probably as a means to silence the bards roaming the countryside inspiring Cymru to rebellion. These draconian measures backfired spectacularly. Rather than coercing the Welsh into obedience, it only inflamed their defiance. Throughout the rebellion, Owain’s forces were, by-and-large, a mismatched peasant militia, outnumbered and outmatched by the professionally trained and equipped English army. As such, Glyndŵr carried out his war using guerilla tactics, using his country’s hilly terrain to engage in hit-and-run tactics against small bodies of English soldiers moving between strongholds or guarding baggage trains, picking them off with arrow fire before retreating out of view. This style of asymmetrical warfare was put on full display in June of 1401 at the battle of Mynydd Hyddgen, when Owain and a small band of archers managed to lure a much larger Anglo-Flemish force into the remote and isolated Hyddgen Valley, isolating and decimating them. The six-foot longbow had proven itself to be the world’s deadliest infantry weapon on the fields of Agincourt and Crecy. Now, the very same weapon which had secured English victories on those French battlefields rained death upon them in the valleys of Wales. Glyndŵr’s early military successes were aided by growing schisms in the English political scene. The man who Henry IV had appointed to suppress the resurgent Welsh revolt was the young Sir Henry “Hotspur,” a member of the House of Percy, the most powerful noble family in Northern England. Due to an ongoing dispute with King Henry over a failure to pay his troops, Hotspur’s efforts against the Welsh were lackluster at best. In the fall of 1401, The King took matters back into his own hands and led a large royal expedition into Wales. Bogged down by soggy weather and constantly harassed by rebel guerillas who refused to meet him in pitched battle; the King accomplished basically nothing. Meanwhile, Glyndŵr’s successes continued to build upon themselves. In April of 1402, the Prince of Wales settled a personal vendetta when he ambushed and captured his arch-enemy, Lord Reginald Grey. The Baron of Ruthin made for a useful hostage, and was eventually ransomed for a high sum, but he was not nearly as valuable as the next English notable to fall into Glyndŵr’s clutches. On the 22nd of June, the Owain met a 2,000 strong county levy out of Herefordshire in battle on a hill near Pilleth village. Through clever use of the high ground, Glyndŵr’s warband crushed their numerically superior foe, killing over 1,100 of the English, and capturing their leader, Sir Edmund Mortimer, the cousin of the King. Sir Mortimer was a dynastic liability to King Henry, since he was a closer blood relation than him to the previous King, Richard II, who Henry had deposed via coup. For this reason, Henry refused to pay Mortimer’s ransom. This backfired on him spectacularly, for Glyndŵr quickly converted Mortimer into his ally, giving the Welsh Rebels a powerful new friend with significant influence in English politics. King Henry’s internecine woes continued to compound upon themselves in the summer of 1403, when Hotspur raised the standard of revolt against him at Chester. The renegade knight was killed weeks later at the Battle of Shrewsbury, but his kinsmen in the House of Percy took up the mantle of defiance. Henry now had to deal with rebellion in not just Wales, but large swathes of Northern England too. Meanwhile, English strongholds fell like dominoes across Wales, with Glyndŵr’s forces managing to capture the strategically critical castles of Harlech, Caernarfon and Aberystwyth, crippling King Henry’s ability to project power

in the country. At this point in the war, Glyndŵr had taken to flying the banner of a Golden Dragon into battle, a sacred symbol which identified him Y Mab Darogan, a chosen hero prophesied in the ancient verses of the Armes Prydain to drive the Anglo-Saxon invaders out of Britain and return the island to the heirs of Cadwaladr, Uther Pendragon and Arthur.

Soon, Glyndŵrmania had officially gone international. In 1404, Glyndŵr formed a national parliament out of representatives from across the country, and convened them at Machynlleth. There, in front of a vast assembly which included ambassadors from France, Brittany, Scotland and the Kingdoms of Iberia, Owain Glyndŵr was officially proclaimed the Prince of Wales. The French in particular were especially to make friends with the newly crowned monarch. With the Hundred Years War having recently aired its season two finale, Paris was eager for any opportunity to destabilize their English archenemies, and would make a powerful ally for Glyndŵr going forward. Cymru was now, de facto, an independent nation with international recognition, and its leader had many ambitious plans for its future. These included the establishment of an independent Welsh Church and the founding of two Welsh universities. Moreover, English common law was to be abolished, and the traditional Welsh laws of Hywel Dda were to be reintroduced as the nation's guiding legislation. However, all of this would have to wait until the war was won. In February of 1405, the Prince of Wales solidified his partnership with his two main English allies, Edmund Mortimer and Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland and father of the late Hotspur. Together, they signed the tripartide indenture, an agreement to partition the Kingdom of England among themselves once King Henry IV had been deposed. Per this deal, the House of Percy would claim the North of England, Mortimer would take the south, and Glyndŵr would annex large chunks of western England into his natal Welsh nation. Not only had the new Prince of Wales thrown off English rule in his native country, he now posed a very real threat to the Kingdom of England's very existence as a unified entity! With that said, within a month of signing this agreement, Owain suffered his first major military defeats when his forces were crushed at the Battles of Grosmont and Pwll Melyn by an English army led by the young Henry of Monmouth, the future King Henry V. An ill omen indeed. However, these setbacks did not put Owain on the backfoot, for help was on the way. Later that year, 2,500 French troops landed at Milford Haven and joined Glyndŵr's armies in a joint-campaign that saw the capture of several English holdouts in Southern Wales, including Haverfordwest, Tenby, Carmarthen, and Cardigan. From there, they crossed the border into England, preparing to strike deep into English territory. However, as they approached Worcester, Glyndŵr feared he had overextended his army, and made the fateful decision to withdraw. Many historians consider this a decisive point in Welsh history; had Glyndŵr continued his advance, he quite probably could have deposed King Henry IV, and split England into three among his allies as he'd planned. Indeed, had Glyndŵr pushed forward at this critical juncture, the history of the British Isles would have been very different indeed.

The tide of war is often a fickle thing. Up until now, it seemed that everything was going right for Glyndŵr and wrong for Henry IV, but the see-saw began to tip when the young Henry of Monmouth took charge of the English war effort on his father's behalf. Prince Henry was shrewd enough to understand that his father's strategy of sending punitive expeditions into Wales was not a sustainable one. Rather than marching troops into the country just for them to be drawn into the valleys and picked off by Glyndŵr's guerillas, he used England's naval supremacy, her vastly superior resources, and the few Welsh castles still under English control enact an economic blockade, choking

Wales off from supplies and trade. This impoverished the Welsh countryside, reducing vast swathes of the population to destitution and starvation. Slowly but surely, rebel lords throughout Wales were forced to surrender, paying a fine to the King's Bailiffs as restitution for their participation in the revolt, and renewing their oaths of loyalty to the English crown. Things quickly went from bad to worse for Glyndŵr when, on top of hemorrhaging supporters, he also began rapidly losing foreign support. By 1406, French forces had withdrawn in Wales, and after politics in Paris had shifted towards a party that favoured peace with England, no more help from them was forthcoming. In 1408, Earl Henry Percy was killed in the battle of Bramham Moor, depriving Glyndŵr of his most powerful English ally. With the unrest in the North of England quelled, the English Crown focused the brunt of their attention on the Welsh revolt. With Owain's position considerably weakened, royal forces advanced deep into Wales, laying sieges to key strongholds under rebel control. Aberystwyth castle had fallen back in autumn of 1407, while Harlech Castle fell in 1409. During the siege of the latter, Owain's second key ally, Edmund Mortimer, perished in the fighting. In just four short years, Owain Glyndŵr had gone from an internationally recognized Prince of an independent Welsh Nation to a landless hill bandit. By the end of 1409, although the rebel Prince remained at large, the dream of an independent Wales was effectively over. In 1410, he launched one final deep raid into Shropshire, a disastrous venture which resulted in the capture and execution of many of his last loyal commanders. After that, Owain Glyndŵr disappears from the pages of history, presumably having died sometime in the year 1415.

In the end, the renegade Prince of Wales's war to free the Brythonic people from the alien overlordship of England was a failed one. Never again would the Welsh people have an independent country to call their own, spending the rest of their history as part of the Kingdom of England, and later, Great Britain. Despite this, the legacy of Owain Glyndŵr lives on to this day, looming large in national folklore as a founding father of the modern Welsh identity. Modern Wales may not be a fully independent nation, but her unique culture has weathered centuries of English assimilation, as has her ancient Celtic language, still spoken by hundreds of thousands of her citizens. It is, in large part, due to historical figures like Owain Glyndŵr, that the Welsh people of today remember the never ending struggle their ancestors fought to ensure their culture and language survived long enough to be passed into their hands, and remember the importance of ensuring that the history, identity and language of beautiful Cymru- the land of Britain's most senior peoples, survives for countless generations more to come. In the end, the renegade Prince of Wales's war to free the Brythonic people from the alien overlordship of England was a failed one. Never again would the Welsh people have an independent country to call their own, spending the rest of their history as part of the Kingdom of England, and later, Great Britain. Despite this, the legacy of Owain Glyndŵr lives on to this day, looming large in national folklore as a founding father of the modern Welsh identity. This does, however, beg the question: what did the history of the Welsh people look like after their independence was permanently ended, and how has the Welsh language survived into the modern day? Even after the last embers of the Glyndŵr uprising were extinguished, the Cymri would continue to play a disproportionately influential role in shaping the history of England. The House of Tudor is an instantly recognizable name to anyone even passingly familiar with English history, conjuring images of the many-wived Henry VIII at his feast table, or the virgin queen Elizabeth staring down the Spanish Armada. However, the name Tudor is not English but of Brythonic origin. Indeed, the Royal House of Tudor traces its roots to the Tudurs of Penmynydd, an old Uchelwyr

family with lands in Ynys Mon. The Tudors had been among Owain Glyndŵr's closest allies during the War of Independence. Yet, in one of history's more amusing twists, they proved far better at triumphing over English royalty in the bedroom than they ever did on the field of battle. At some point after the rebellion ended, a young scion of the House of Tudor, Owain ap Maredudd, made his way into the royal household as a bodyguard of Queen Catherine of Valois, the wife of Henry V. Among the English, Owain abandoned the Welsh practice of patronymic naming and adopted a fixed surname in the English fashion, going by 'Owen Tudor.' After the King died of dysentery in 1422, the Queen evidently turned her eyes upon the young, strapping Welshman in her employ and invited him to her royal chambers. The two were secretly married in 1428, and had two sons: Edmund and Jasper Tudor. When the late King's son, Henry VI, took the throne, he ennobled his two half brothers, investing them with lands and titles. From 1455 onwards, the Kingdom of England became engulfed in the War of the Roses, a dynastic strife fought between two branches of the royal family, the House of York and the House of Lancaster. Since King Henry VI was a Lancaster, the newly ennobled Tudors, alongside most of Wales, threw their lot in with him. Fast forward to 1471 and oops! All the Lancasters were dead, including the late Henry VI and his heir. Henceforth, the only remaining blood relative of the Lancasters was one Henry Tudor, the son of Edmund Tudor and nephew of the dead Lancastrian King. In 1485, Henry Tudor raised an army, crushed the Yorkist King Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field, and became Henry VII, King of England. So it was that the Tudors, a family originally from the heart of Wales, became the monarchs of England. Henry VII was certainly conscious of his Welsh heritage, at least when it helped him rally support from his Welsh followers. In battle, he flew the Red Dragon of Cadwaladr, and many in Wales called him Y Mab Darogan, the same hero of prophecy they had once believed Owain Glyndŵr was. Still, he probably only spoke English, especially since he was raised in Little England beyond Wales, a pocket of Pembrokeshire where the English language predominated. Indeed, the ascendancy of the House of Tudor was not some revival of Celtic Kingship over the isle of Albion. Granted, the reign of the Tudors did represent a slight uptick in the fortunes of the Welsh people. In 1535 and 1542, during the reign of the second Tudor King Henry VIII, yes- the many wives guy, parliament passed the Laws in Wales Acts. These acts abolished the centuries-old special status of the Marcher Lordships and legally incorporated Wales into the Kingdom of England. These acts were quite popular among the Welsh gentry because they repealed the hated penal laws that had been imposed upon them during the Glyndŵr rising and gave them equal representation in the English parliament. Still, the Laws in Wales Acts were double-edged swords. While on the one hand, they lifted Welshmen to the level of Englishmen in the eyes of the law, on the other, they abolished any official status the Welsh language enjoyed, making English the only language of law and education during a time when Wales was still populated mainly by monolingual Welsh speakers. Nevertheless, Welsh would remain the language of the majority of the population for centuries to come. This was due in large part to the efforts of the Welsh Church, which used the ancient tongue of Cymru as its primary liturgical vehicle. In 1707, when England and Scotland united to form the Kingdom of Great Britain, Wales, which was already part of England, was automatically folded into this new polity. Incidentally, this is why the Welsh Dragon is not included in the Union Jack. In any case, as the British Empire proceeded to spread over a fourth of the planet's surface, the Welsh people spread with it, bringing their culture and language to every corner of the earth. Bartholomew Roberts, the terror of the Caribbean, was a Welshman

who spoke Welsh as a first language. Originally a humble second mate aboard a slave ship, Roberts was taken captive by a dauntless Welsh pirate, Howell Davis. By being the only one able to converse with Davis in his native Welsh language, Roberts quickly rose from prisoner to trusted confidant, and, eventually, into the single most fearsome and successful pirate of the golden age of piracy. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Welsh people formed vibrant diaspora communities in the New World, most prominently in the Anglosphere nations of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, but sometimes further afield as well. Many of these Welsh communities were predominantly Welsh speaking, and did not experience a linguistic shift to English until very late in their history. The Welsh community in Jackson County, Ohio, for example, was printing their newspapers in Welsh until the 1940s. One Welsh diaspora community retains its native Celtic tongue today. In 1865, a group of Welsh emigrants made landfall in what is now Chubut Province, Argentina, seeking to create a home for themselves far away from the assimilating influence of the English language. They are still there today, existing as a bilingual community that speaks both Spanish and Welsh. Back in the British Isles, the advent of the industrial revolution had created a massive demand for coal, and it just so happened that southern Wales had some of the largest coalfields in the world. By the 1910s, the Welsh towns of Barry and Cardiff were the largest coal exporting ports in the world. It is no surprise then, that 20th century Welsh history is synonymous with the struggle of the working class coal miner, and his struggle for basic labour rights in a grueling job rife with health hazards and physical peril. It was also around this time that the Welsh language began a steady, gloomy retreat. As the world became smaller and ever more interconnected, many Welsh families saw the English language as the only way to achieve economic and social advancement in a rapidly modernizing society. In schools, children were educated exclusively in English, and in many cases, were subject to corporal punishment or public humiliation if caught speaking Welsh. By the year 1911, Welsh was no longer the majority language of Wales, and was spoken by only 43% of the population. By 1931, this number had shrunk to 36%, and by 1961, to 26%. Yet, as we have seen time and again throughout this documentary, the Welsh are a proud people who have always fought tooth and nail to protect that which sets them apart from the Saesneg of Lloegyr. Throughout the latter decades of the 20th century, they rallied around their language. Through the efforts of activist groups like the Welsh Language Society and Welsh nationalist political parties like Plaid Cymru, the ancient tongue of the Celtic Britons was slowly brought back from the brink. In 1967, parliament passed the Welsh Language Act, which, for the first time since the reign of Henry VIII, allowed the Welsh language to be used in legal proceedings in Wales. Subsequently, Welsh re-entered Welsh schools as a language of education and instruction. Another Welsh Language Act in 1993 put the Welsh language on complete equal footing with English. In 1998, after six centuries of direct English rule, the Welsh people regained a degree of self-determination through the Government of Wales Act, which established the Senedd Cymru, or Welsh parliament, which would legislate internal affairs for the constituent country of Wales in both the English and Welsh languages. Three years later, in 2001, a national census confirmed that the number of Welsh speakers in Wales had, for the first time in two centuries, begun to increase again. Today, over 900,000 people, close to a third of the total population of Wales, are conversational in the Celtic tongue. Modern Wales may not be a fully independent nation, but her unique culture has weathered centuries of English assimilation, as has her ancient Celtic language. It is, in large part, due to historical figures like Rhodri ap Merfyn, Hywel Dda, Llywelyn

ap Gruffydd and Owain Glyndŵr that the Welsh people of today remember the never ending struggle their ancestors fought to ensure their culture and language survived long enough to be passed into their hands, and remember the importance of ensuring that the history, identity and language of beautiful Cymru- the land of Britain's most senior peoples, survives for countless generations more to come.

13 Siege of Rhodes - Diadochi Wars - Ancient History DOCUMENTARY

Wars of the Diadochi Episode VII: Fourth War of the Diadochi Volume II Introduction: The Antigonids had done it once more. In a stunning victory, Demetrios and Antigonus had managed to seize the Jewel of the Empire of Ptolemy, the island of Cyprus. Thereafter, they crowned themselves Kings, leaving aside all pretensions of protecting Alexander's lineage. Following this, the other Diadochi all decided to do the same. These Kings sought to be Alexander in Alexander's place and secure their own domains for the future of their dynasties. All bets were now off, as these Titans of Antiquity would clash in the seas of the Mediterranean. The Fourth War of the Diadochi had lasted far longer than anyone originally anticipated, and its climactic battle was about to occur on a tiny isle which, up until now, had been trying to stay neutral: the Island of Rhodes. After assuming his title as Saviour God and now King of Asia, the young Demetrios will now assume his most well-known title: Poliorketes, the Besieger of Cities. Welcome to our seventh video on the Wars of the Diadochi, focusing on the Battle of Rhodes. Why Rhodes: The City of Rhodes was both a suitable and an unorthodox target for the Antigonids to go after. According to Diodoros Sikelos, it was a very stable and prosperous polis, which was a very important benefit in a very unstable world. This meant that all of the various Diadochi wished to gain control over this rich hub. However, the Rhodians themselves were reluctant to pick a side, as it was in their economic interest to be friends with all but allied with none. With that said, the Rhodians did show slight favour to their biggest trading partner, the Ptolemies. This meant they were prone to avoid open alliances with their enemies, which is why they had denied assistance to Demetrios for the Battle of Salamis in our previous episode. Demetrios, thus, wanted to take control of this vital nexus point and, by doing so, gain more leverage against Ptolemy. By taking control of the island that was the gateway to the Aegean and establishing a base of operations upon it, he could dominate the Eastern Mediterranean. It was thus a pragmatic choice, though it would cost him in infamy, as attacking the neutral, mercantile city made him look like a common pirate to most of the Hellenic city-states. Siege of Rhodes: At the port of Loryma, the Antigonid army began assembling under Demetrios. 200 warships were amassed, many pimped up with artillery machines. Additionally, 170 supply ships were loaded up for the over 40,000 troops enlisted to besiege the island city. Diodoros Sikelos claims, perhaps spuriously, that 1,000 smaller pirate ships gathered up behind the Antigonid fleet, waiting like vultures to take advantage of the destruction of Rhodes. Some of these pirates were hired by Demetrios to serve as light raiders. With his army gathered, the Demetrios set sail for Rhodes. When news of this reached the Rhodians, they assembled 6,000 of their citizens, 1,000 metics, and an unidentified number of their enslaved population. Their defence force assembled, there was nothing to do but wait until the Antigonid army appeared. When Demetrios's navy arrived upon the island, they blockaded the port of Rhodes completely while his troops made landfall in the southwest plains. After this, Demetrios sent the pirates to conduct raids across the island to both irritate and cause damage to the Rhodian population. The Rhodians tried to negotiate at first, but these attempts at diplomacy were fruitless, so they resolved to fight. In a bold move, three Rhodian ships broke out from their well-fortified harbour, sank a few of the Antigonid ships, and dashed back to their harbour triumphant. Rhodian craftsmanship had already shown itself to be invaluable. The blockade was never fully successful,

as Ptolemaic-funded supplies continued to enter Rhodes, meaning that Rhodes was not alone in its hour of need. The diplomatic connections of the Rhodians further paid off when they sent envoys to Kassander and Lysimachos. Doubling down on the blockade, Demetrios built another harbour alongside a wave-breaker to make sure his ships would be secure. Moreover, he loaded up his smaller ships with small artillery and Cretan archers for quick attacks on the Rhodians. He then constructed two big platforms on top of four warships united in two pairs and then put his catapults on top of said platforms. He did the same with siege towers on top of platforms strapped on supply ships, thereby building a mobile amphibious siege arsenal. The Rhodians responded by mounting their own artillery on their ships, harbour, walls and mole. With the preparations and the stand-off completed, and after bad weather thwarted an initial attack, the battle officially began. Demetrios began his assault at nightfall by sending 500 men to drive at the mole before establishing a beachhead. Leaving 400 men to ensure control of the site, he waited until the next morning and then towed his large, artillery-mounted ships onto the harbour and commenced a projectile assault. The Rhodians weathered this storm with great heroism, returning fire with stubborn resistance. Rhodes suffered heavy losses, but they withstood for the duration of the assault. The Antigonids eventually withdrew, and the Rhodians tried to chase after them and burn the retreating armada, but to no avail. Soon, Demetrios regrouped his forces, turned back, and recommenced his assault. This time, through the use of amphibious landings, they established a foothold on the walls. However, the Antigonid forces were eventually repulsed once more. The following week was quiet as the Rhodians buried their dead, and Demetrios regrouped and reorganized his forces. Demetrios' next move was to escalate the pressure on the defenders with a two-pronged strategy. He took his light ships, full of archers, moved them in close proximity to the defenders' base, and then began to shoot flaming projectiles at the defenders on the Rhodian ships. This was meant to burn the enemy ships and cripple their naval defences. Simultaneously, Demetrios ordered the catapults and artillery to attack the walls while striking at the enemies on the front ramparts. Soon, the walls began to break down like those of Jericho in the Hebrew Bible, but the sailors on the ships managed to save their vessels from being completely burned. The fate of Rhodes now teetered on a knife's edge, so the defenders resorted to desperate tactics. They took two of their light vessels and made a suicide run towards the siege engine warships, managing to ram and destroy the enemy vessels, sacrificing themselves for the future of their polis, a noble deed equal to that of the Three Hundred. However, two engines managed to escape while the remaining Rhodians were surrounded and captured. Nevertheless, this attack was ultimately successful, for it did enough damage to force Demetrios to retreat. Shortly after, a fierce storm churned up, giving the Rhodians even more breathing room. Consequently, moved down into the mole and destroyed the outpost and the Antigonid troops within, breaking the landing from one side of the island. Soon after, Ptolemaic aid in the form of 650 troops entered through the blockade, reinforcing the defenders. As 304 BCE rolled around and Demetrios turned 32 years old, the King of Asia resolved to do one more land assault. Possibly using the remnants from Salamis, he ordered another construction of a Helepolis, a giant siege tower. This tower was larger than the ones he had built before and was reinforced with iron front plates to avoid fire attacks. With this monumental achievement in ancient engineering, it was here that Demetrios truly became Poliorketes: the Besieger of Cities. During the construction of the Helepolis, the Rhodians scrambled to construct a second wall and reinforce their defences while also sending their ships to attack enemy supply lines at sea. Multiple ramming assaults

took place during the winter, resulting in the Rhodians securing supplies in the form of grain. As this was happening, Demetrios decided to play with fire. He took his team of Sappers and began to construct tunnels underneath the outer walls. Upon realizing what was happening, the Rhodians began to dig their own counter-tunnels. As the battle was raging on top, the two tunnels ended up burrowing up against each other, and an underground battle ensued. Meanwhile, Demetrios prepared for the ramming assault; he cleared the way for the Helepolis while also building up penthouses for his men to hide in while using battering rams. At some point during this siege, the Rhodians stockpiled their Ptolemaid-supplied ordinance, waited for a dark night without the presence of the Moon Goddess Selene, and then barraged the Helepolis, damaging it severely but not fully disabling it. Some Athenians in the city tried to negotiate with Demetrios under a man called Athenagoras. Demetrios sent a man named Alexander the Macedonian to meet Athenagoras as a pretext to infiltrate the city, but the Athenian informed the Rhodians of this, who killed him on the spot. The catapults rained stones as the rams approached like massive boars, and the Helepolis slowly moved forward by the force of 3,400 soldiers. Eventually, the combined assault collapsed the walls, which came crashing down and caused a Rhodian retreat. The victorious Antigonids passed through, coming face to face the recently constructed inner walls. In order to break through the inner walls, Demetrios placed his most skilled general, Alkimos, in charge of 1,500 of his most elite troops and ordered them to conduct a night raid on the city. That night, Alkimos and the elite troops broke through into the city and moved inwards with relative ease, confident in their victory. However, as soon as they reached the theatre, the Rhodian defenders descended upon them with the vicious fury of men defending their hometown. After a long and bloody battle, all of the Antigonid troops were either dead or captured. The siege resumed as previously, with Demetrios growing angrier and more impatient than ever. It was here that a message was delivered to him. It was from Antigonos, who was fearful that the dragging out of the siege of Rhodes was severely damaging the Antigonids' reputation. Because of this, Antigonos ordered Demetrios to lift the siege. Despite still having a lot of resources at his disposal, Demetrios begrudgingly accepted and entered into negotiations with the Rhodians. The following settlement was reached:

1. Rhodes would be an autonomous and demilitarised city.
2. Rhodes would be exempt from tribute and continue trade freely.
3. Rhodes was to become an Antigonid ally except against Ptolemy.
4. 100 citizens were to be sent as hostages.

With the deal secured, Demetrios sailed away, not defeated but repelled by a twist of geopolitics. Nevertheless, the Rhodians had defended their homes valiantly despite heavy losses. Aftermath: In the end, the Antigonids did not manage to conquer Rhodes, which was a major propaganda victory for the anti-Antigonid coalition. For the Rhodians, it was a massive success. According to Diodoros Sikelos, the victorious islanders liberated all the enslaved people who had fought by their side as promised. They also built up statues of Kassander and Lysimachos in their city. The most important honour, however, was saved for Ptolemy. The Rhodians sent their envoys to the Oracle of Ammun, where Alexander was declared the son of Zeus, and asked it about possibly deifying Ptolemy. The Oracle gave their blessing, and a large square in the city called Ptolemaeum was constructed in the city, a mass complex where Ptolemy was worshipped as a God. This was not an uncommon practice. Indeed, Demetrios was also called a God by the Athenians. The other major legacy of the siege of Rhodes was architecture, resulting in the construction of one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. To commemorate their victory, the Rhodians decided to honour their patron deity, the God of the Sun, Helios. Selling the Antigonid

equipment left on their island for 300 talents, they instructed a local Rhodian, Chares of Lindos, to construct a massive statue on the site of the harbour. This statue was the famous Kolossos of Rhodes, which stood at 33 metres tall. The statue greeted people in the harbour. It was a testament to the power of the Sun and a monument of the Rhodians who had fought during the city's finest hour. And what of Demetrios? He was instructed to leave not just for the propaganda issues the siege was causing but also because the political situation on the Greek mainland was changing. As we will remember from our last episode, many Greek city-states like Athens had aligned with the Antigonids, who claimed to be defending Hellenic freedom from the Macedonian garrisons. However, in retribution for this, Kassander laid siege to the city. This attack was going very badly for Athens, but the news of Demetrios making a landing at Chalcis in northern Attica caused Kassander to reconsider and conduct an orderly retreat. He began to move back towards Macedon, with Demetrios hot on his tail. The two armies ended up meeting in the Kallidromon mountain pass, where, after a battle, 6,000 Macedonians defected to join the cause of the ascendant Poliorketes. Kassander fled with his remaining troops, and his authority in Greece was now on shaky grounds. After this victory, Demetrios turned around and decided to secure his control over southern Greece. He moved down to the Peloponnese, where major Ptolemaic and Kassandrian garrisons were placed, and ordered a full-scale invasion of the Peloponnese. He expelled the enemy troops and then declared the freedom of all Hellenic poleis. He was also declared Commander of the Hellenes, invoking the Pan-Hellenic ideal that Philip and Alexander utilized for their own control over Greece. Everyone to the south of Macedon, except for the ever-isolationist Spartans, accepted him. Demetrios also married a local Molossian Princess, Deidameia, securing an alliance between Epiros and the Antigonids. Still licking his wounds, Kassander tried to negotiate for peace with Antigonos, but the One-Eyed General demanded that he surrender completely. When the Antigonid reply reached Kassander in 303 BCE, he refused and called on Lysimachos, who was finally free of Thracian attacks. Lysimachos met with Kassander at Pella, and they both sent envoys to Ptolemy and Seleukos to strengthen the dynastic alliance against the combined Hellenic and Asiatic forces of the two Saviour Gods. Ptolemy accepted the messengers in Alexandria, gleefully obliged the plea for help, and began to prepare for an invasion of Sidon. But the envoys who were meant for Babylon arrived at an inopportune time, for Seleukos was in the East and thus had to travel further east to reach him. Thus, the alliance against Antigonos was coming together, but it would take some time to be fully formed. However, when it did, it would make all of the Eastern Mediterranean tremble. Conclusion: With the failure of the Siege of Rhodes and the completion of the Colossus, the sun had finally set on one of the Antigonid's greatest military fumbles. Nevertheless, the Antigonid Kingdom remained strong, still spanning all of Syria and Anatolia. However, their enemies were ready for their vengeance. The final battle of the Fourth War of the Diadochi was looming over the horizon, and it is this battle that will shift the fate of the Hellenistic World.